

HOLISTIC HEALING EVANGELISM AMONG THE SONJO TRIBE  
OF TANZANIA: POWER EVANGELISM RELEASING  
HEALING TO BODY, SOUL, AND SPIRIT

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A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
Dayton, Ohio  
May, 2014



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## **ABSTRACT**

### **HOLISTIC HEALING EVANGELISM AMONG THE SONJO TRIBE OF TANZANIA: POWER EVANGELISM RELEASING HEALING TO BODY, SOUL, AND SPIRIT**

by

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The focus of the research was to discover the perception of Christianity among the unreached Sonjo tribe of Tanzania as a case study for a proposed ministry concept called holistic healing evangelism. This model of evangelism demonstrates power to heal mental bondage, heart issues, and physical ailments. The study used a grounded theory approach. Data was gathered from the Sonjo people using thirty interviews, field notes, and twenty-five photographs. The data reveals fear and shame as key barriers to Christianity among the Sonjo. The results support holistic healing evangelism as a significant model to pursue for ministry among the Sonjo.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my mother and father for giving me a reason to believe. This project builds upon the things they instilled in me.

I am grateful for mentors who have made a significant impact on the journey leading to this endeavor. These include Dr. Russell West, Dr. Deborah Strong, Dr. Steven Kiruswa, and Dr. James Lee.

I am also indebted to Dr. Jon Ruthven, Dr. Gary Greig, and Dr. Andrew Park for their expertise, guidance, and encouragement throughout this process.

This project would not have been possible without my Christian colleagues in the Sonjo. These connections were made possible through Bishop Glorious Shoo of the Tanzania Assembly of God. I am grateful for the faithful partnership of these friends.

I appreciate the generous involvement of Melanie Bell and Peter Neuberger as outside analysts. Their input was clear, concise, and provided strength for the study.

Lastly, I would like to thank Randy Clark and his team for welcoming me to join the Global Awakening group for this experience. It has been life-changing.

God alone can be thanked for all of the above as well as giving me the grace to know him, the desire to serve him, and the opportunity to participate in this program.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GA	Global Awakening
HHE	Holistic Healing Evangelism
NASB	New American Standard Version of the Bible
NIV	New International Version of the Bible
PD	Positive Deviance
T.E.A.M. Africa	Teaching, Equipping, and Mobilizing Africa
UPG	Unreached People Group

## INTRODUCTION

Imagine a single white girl from South Carolina transplanted into the most interior regions of Africa in the Serengeti plains. Why has she come? That is simple: to take the gospel to the unreached. She has her biblical basis for mission to explain her decision, supporters and intercessors abroad, courage to venture into the unknown, and excitement as to what lies ahead. She is living her dream. Welcome to her story.

The journey unfolds with the romance of daring to engage the most unreached peoples of Africa, intentionally seeking them out, and determining to play a part in the redemption of a lost African tribe. Fast forward five years. This is where this project begins. After years of evangelism and training in remote African villages, despite every intention to contextualize and mobilize, the painful truth began to dash the hopes of seeing a people group redeemed. Mixing of pagan practices with Christianity was the norm rather than the exception. Pastors were unaware of the need to forgive others.<sup>1</sup> Faithfulness to rituals and witchdoctors was a given, even for many in the churches. It highlighted the sad truth that the missionaries had focused on their part: going, sacrificing, speaking, teaching, preaching, and giving information. But they had not considered evaluating the whole objective: are the listeners understanding?

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<sup>1</sup> I heard this comment after I gave a teaching on forgiveness. A pastor said he was wondering if he might need to forgive a person he was holding a grudge against. It was as if it was a new idea to him.

Paul's reference comes to mind: "Now we see through a glass dimly."<sup>2</sup>The author can testify that this is a reality for our best efforts to take the gospel to the world, the activity we call "missions." Even as we prophesy in part, we also do missions in part. After nearly five years serving in Tanzania, there seemed to be a great need to learn more about how we take this good news to a people who have no convenient point of reference. It was baffling to acknowledge that their greatest fear was the power of Satan, yet the power of Jesus to defeat Satan was not a dominant part of the gospel demonstration. The good news was given "in part." Proclamation without demonstration: a travesty.

This document is a window into the life of one Jesus follower who is obeying Jesus' command to take the gospel to those who are still waiting to hear but admits that she is also doing her mission "in part." The experience described in this document is the result of the author's missionary journey together with God's invitation to rethink missions.<sup>3</sup> How then shall we do missions? Five years of evangelism in unreached areas is causing the author to ask this question. This project is a head-on collision with the realities, challenges, and hopes of the author's slice of the missions world. This project overlaps with a pause to acknowledge what has been learned so far in Tanzania. This has

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 13:12, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known." *New American Standard Bible* (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995). Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible references in this paper are from the NASB.

<sup>3</sup> In August 2009, I sensed God speaking, "I am going to show you how to do your job better." Then in October 2009 at a Global Awakening conference, God clarified that "the way to do your job better" was to demonstrate the power of the gospel through signs, wonders, and miracles as a means of evangelism. In essence, power evangelism. He was speaking about the need for the unreached to have a power encounter with the living God which assures them that God is the one true God and has more power than any other god or power they have ever encountered. Then God said healing must be holistic. This is the message he wants to take to the unreached—a God who frees the mind, breaks the heart conditions of shame and rejection, and also heals the physical body as a witness of the revelation of Jesus.



caused the author to wrestle with a style of evangelism which is focused more on proclaiming the theology of Jesus rather than demonstrating the freedom He provides over the satanic strongholds operating among unreached peoples. At the end of the day, it can be told that a new convert came to Christ but tomorrow that new believer will head to the witchdoctor to curse her neighbor who is prospering more than she. And this will continue beyond tomorrow. But the author has not gone to Africa for this legacy: many converts who never leave their satanic rituals and witchcraft. Instead, the author has hopes of seeing converts who are freed from the powers which have been binding and tormenting them. This project is one way of engaging this issue.

The project will travel deep into the fields of Africa, past the Serengeti Plains, to reach the Sonjo tribe of Tanzania. They are hard to reach, resistant to change, faithful to their one god and prefer to be left alone. But God, He has a different idea—His love, power and redemption must reach every tribe, tongue, and nation.<sup>4</sup> So the Sonjo must hear the good news. This is the author's privilege.

This study fits into the larger context of the author's long-term commitment to reaching the Sonjo tribe. With this bigger picture in mind the project is designed to make the most significant and foundational contribution to the author's ongoing efforts of releasing a new model of evangelism among the Sonjo. This includes three objectives.

The first objective is to establish a theoretical foundation for an evangelism model which promotes healing as an evangelistic strategy and the scope of healing to include not just physical healing but deliverance of mental strongholds such as fear, and release of heart conditions such as shame. The author's view of healing as evangelism is not a new

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<sup>4</sup> Revelation 5:9.

concept. However, the strong conviction that healing and evangelism must also directly deal with heart and mind issues such as unforgiveness, fear, and shame is not exactly common. Though no one would disagree that the good news declares that all of these things are changed by God's love, the truth is that much evangelism leaves the listener in the dark as to how to get rid of pride, anger, jealousy, fear, shame, lust and other inner strongholds. So we offer the good news without giving the person a reason, vision, or a basis for trusting that God is good. He has power to remove all the inner darkness; He can heal anything; and He wants to do it now. This is not a baseline for normal evangelism. Therefore, the first objective is to provide a grounding for the concept of holistic healing evangelism. This is a concept which prioritizes physical, mental, emotional, and relational strongholds as the direct object of evangelism. In addition to the listener receiving a revelation of who Jesus is and how to get to heaven, the listener must encounter a message of hope and power to overcome the inner world of darkness. This is covered in the first half of this document in the background and theoretical sections.

The second objective is to understand what is happening in the Sonjo tribe's experience with Christianity before trying to fix it. Seek first to understand before being understood as Covey instructs.<sup>5</sup> This means that the goal of adjusting evangelism will come only after making efforts to understand what is happening now with evangelism in the Sonjo. This is the second step of this project. It is covered in the second half of this document which discusses the project design and implementation. The goal will be to get a glimpse of the face of the gospel as it exists now in the Sonjo. What characterizes their perception of the gospel based on the current evangelistic efforts? Through this

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<sup>5</sup> Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2004).

sociological inquiry into their perceptions, benefits, and risks of Christianity, contrasts and comparisons can be made with the author's concept of holistic healing evangelism.

The third objective is mentioned though it is outside the scope of this project and document. It will follow this project in the author's continued ministry to the Sonjo. This third step will be to use the knowledge gained in steps one and two to implement a longer-term impact among the Sonjo to equip them with a broader biblical basis, practical steps for demonstrating God's power, training on ethnographic research to inform their evangelism, and intentional efforts to address bondages and healing needed in body, soul and spirit of the Sonjo people.

A systematic development of the author's journey, which led to this project, along with the project details and results will unfold in six chapters. Chapter One is the ministry focus which creates the backdrop on which the project emerged. This canvas weaves together the author's spiritual journey and current ministry context in Tanzania. Together these form the setting which birthed her questions on how we do missions. Chapter Two seeks substantive answers to these questions through foundational biblical, historical, and theological analysis of holistic healing—healing of body, soul, and spirit—as a biblical model of evangelism. This is followed by Chapter Three which considers notable feedback on issues related to the project, including literature reviews as well as practical ministry models. Next, Chapter Four details the research goals and methods which guided the field work. Chapter Five discusses the implementation of the research project along with observations derived from the data analysis. Finally, Chapter Six provides reflections, implications for practice, lessons learned, recommendations for future study, and conclusions.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **MINISTRY FOCUS**

This chapter will paint a broad backdrop for the project including more details of the author's ministry in Tanzania as well as how she ended up doing evangelism in unreached African tribes. The reader will see how her life story has led to a convergence in her current ministry context. The main points of this convergence include missions in the unreached areas, the power of the Holy Spirit, and an unrelenting desire to see real transformation from the gospel. The chapter begins with the author's spiritual journey which led to Africa. Then the reader will learn what ministry and life is like in Tanzania. Finally the reader will see how the project is introduced into this convergence.

#### **Spiritual Journey**

From an early age the author can remember believing not just in Jesus or the Bible, but also in the Holy Spirit. She remembers being unashamed to identify herself as a Pentecostal in high school even though, at the time, Pentecostals were still considered quite strange. A key during this time was regular experiences with revivals, testimonies, and altar calls. She knew the Holy Spirit was real and wanted to be active in the life of a believer and the church. The author's faith grew as she heard testimonies every Wednesday night of how God had moved in a personal way in peoples' lives. Even

though many were not healed, some were and her heart was drawn towards the hope of healing.

On the positive side, the Pentecostal experience convinced her that the gifts of the Spirit were real. She knew she wanted a life which reflected that. The author also wondered about people who were Christians but their lives seemed no different than those who did not believe. She did not see a power to overcome addictions, gossip, a critical spirit, immorality, anger, or other inner struggles. There are distinct memories of thinking the Pentecostals are proud of their theology but in fact there is little evidence of the power, the gifts, or the victorious life. Instead of rejecting an experience that she knew was not right, the author held on to the hope of finding role models and becoming more balanced in how to live the Christian life. She kept going.

By the time the author headed to college she was sure of her salvation and had a strong desire to know the Word. She wanted more of the Holy Spirit but she also was yearning for a more balanced life—seeing others come to Christ and seeing people live with power and victory and meaning. She did not know how to do it and did not have good role models. The search continued.

This was the season when the author first began to wonder how her life would have significance. There was a sense of just going through the motions. The author feared she had become the problem she had observed: a Pentecostal without a significant move of the power of God, without the fruit of new believers, and without a clear path of how to get there.

The next defining moment for the author occurred during her early twenties. The new environment was Clemson University, studying for a Masters in Computer Science.

Even though it was not so far from home, it was far from home. At Clemson, she quickly began meeting Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, witches, and atheists. The author was faced with meeting real people who did not know Jesus and did not care. They had their own belief which was very important to them. Suddenly, she was alarmed and wanted to go tell people all over the world about Jesus. This was the starting point of her call to missions. That call would develop over the years.

The next phase was her first big job and settling into corporate America. In Atlanta, the author began working as a private government contractor. Her work involved software development for command and control communications systems for the Navy. She enjoyed the work but knew there was something more. She decided to ask God to give her a passion for corporate America within two years or release her from that environment. After two years, several events happened which seriously intensified the author's desire to know God's direction. This led to a decision to pursue seminary in preparation for the mission field. The next stop: Regent University to pursue a biblical studies degree.

At Regent the author heard about an opportunity to join a small hand-selected group for an intense year-long program with Dr. Russell West, a professor and founding director of their Doctor of Ministry program. For the next year the group spent four hours one Saturday each month in a think tank of leadership, missions, personal discovery, reflection, and discussion. During the month there were guided readings, questions, and assignments. The author soon realized this was the first time in her life that she had been disciplined in such a committed manner. Dr. West remains the person who has influenced the author the most in going to the field and in the work she is presently doing.

At the same time missions courses were feeding the desire to go to the field. One semester we prayed daily for the nations using the *Operation World* prayer guide.

*Operation World* is recognized as a primary Christian resource to facilitate informed intercession for the world.<sup>6</sup> During this prayer effort, the author was struck by the repeated emphasis on need for leadership training for nationals. This became another piece of the missions picture. First there was the multiplication and reproduction model. Then came the focus on training nationals. The other key component came from the author's local church which was blessed to hire a new missions pastor, Dr. Chris Feucht.

Dr. Chris had one passion—the unreached. The author took several trips to remote areas and soon began to get an idea of what she wanted to do on the field: go to the remote places where people had never heard of Jesus. Also she loved helping national believers. The author could see the impact of pouring into them and not just focusing on the lost. Ideas were coming together but there was some work on the inside which needed to be done.

The following year was a time of great inner healing. It was a season of the dark night of the soul. The author started to look at patterns and had to face the ramifications of being affected by ungodly beliefs. It took time to unpack things, learn to discern, take thoughts captive, and then start over in some very basic areas with God, life and simply being a Christian, but now a Christian with more power and victory.

This was the most critical turning point of the author's spiritual life. It was this season when she adopted John 10:10 as her life verse.<sup>7</sup> It was no longer acceptable to

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<sup>6</sup> Jason Mandryk, *Operation World*, 7th ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica Publishing, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (NIV).

reconcile that we had access to live an abundant life and yet we were trapped in fears, depression, jealousy, and other bondage. It was clear that God wanted whole people and not just saved people. Saved from what anyway? Are we just saved from eternity in hell or saved from hell on earth by living a double-minded life?

There were a few years when God was settling the author spiritually and yet there was a hunger and thirst for more. There were times of lying face down on the floor crying out for more. There was an unquenchable hunger for models of a Holy Spirit-led life and a desire to be that model for others. The author pleaded with God for all the gifts of the Spirit. She saw amazing things on mission trips but back at home, things were not so powerful. Often there were feelings of being disconnected from conversations and normal social agendas. Sometimes she wondered, “Why can’t I just be normal?” But the same hunger for more, from earlier years, was still at work.

In January 2004, out of nowhere, the author sensed God saying it was time to reconsider long-term missions. After all the mission trips, mission training, talking to missionaries, praying through *Operation World*, reading, and all but going, the author had one thing on her mind—the unreached. She asked God to send her there—without a country in mind or even a continent. She had traveled to twenty-five countries and loved them all. God needed to make the location clear.

Within a few weeks the author was invited to go to Tanzania by Deborah Strong, a veteran missionary. A Tanzanian named Steven Kiruswa (from the Maasai tribe) had invited her. Steven and Deborah had studied communications together at Regent University. For several years, Steven had been asking Deborah to come to Tanzania to minister among the Maasai people. She finally agreed and was praying for a lady to travel



with her. God told her one day to ask the author. Four months later the new venue was a remote Maasai village in Tanzania.

After a few days of drinking lots of chai as well as curdled milk, the author discovered that she and Deborah would be training pastors, government leaders, and business leaders—Christians, traditional Maasai as well as Muslims. During those three weeks God clarified that this was the place. The author was called to Tanzania. Two years later she landed again in Tanzania with no return ticket. Her dream had come true. She was on the field spending all her time finding ways to help Tanzanians reach the unreached people in Tanzania.

About this time God connected the author with another mentor. His name was Dr. James Lee. He and his wife had relocated to Virginia Beach and were getting involved in leadership and missions at the author's church. Dr. Lee had been traveling the world training leaders in church planting for twenty years. His focus was unreached areas. Something was different about Dr. Lee. He had an experience with the Holy Spirit which the author wanted. She had never heard stories like his. There were amazing testimonies of healing, miracles, unbelievable provision, relationships restored, and people coming to Christ as a normal part of daily life in America and abroad.

Dr. Lee and his wife poured into the author when she was at home on furloughs. The opportunity came in 2009 to travel with Dr. Lee's team to Ethiopia. That trip with Dr. Lee marked a turning point spiritually. The author knew she had to have more. Dr. Lee was a model of evangelism, discipleship, the Holy Spirit, and more miraculous stories than the author could even fathom. She wanted that. At Dr. Lee's

recommendation, she found herself at a Global Awakening (GA) conference a few months later.

At the conference, God revealed some new instructions. What once was a belief, a desire, and a hope was becoming a calling. God was calling the author to live with the evident power of the Holy Spirit as God intended for us when he made those supernatural gifts available. Specifically He said this is a key for the unreached areas. God told the author in October, 2009: "Healing evangelism is a way to do your job better." That set the stage for the following year in Tanzania.

As soon as the author returned to Tanzania, she decided she would teach on the Holy Spirit, hold healing meetings, pray for healing more, and dive in more to the power of God. More healings and miracles happened than she can even remember. Things she had wanted to see happen her whole life were happening.

During a time of healing prayer while the author was teaching a course on the Holy Spirit, one pastor was healed of stomach problems which he had had for years. She told the pastors that some would be healed without even getting a word of knowledge because the atmosphere of faith would release healing. After the author asked if any others had experienced healing, one pastor said he felt something and knew his stomach was healed. The author was shocked to hear of his healing and shocked at her own skepticism. It has been over three years now and the pastor maintains that he has been healed since that day. He had previously not been able to eat hot food, a lot of food, or late at night but now has no problems at all. This all happened as the author was teaching a course on the Holy Spirit at a village Bible college.

The pastors at this Bible college also had to teach the course within six weeks as part of their homework. The following semester the author asked for their stories and they had incredible testimonies. One pastor said a layperson was feeling heat in his hands. The pastor asked the layperson to pray for a child who had been having seizures several times a month for years. The child was healed and had not had any more seizures. The author asked again when she saw the pastor later and he said there have been no more seizures since the day they prayed. Not only was the child healed, but it was not the missionary or the local pastor who prayed. God used a layperson. Holy Spirit multiplication was working in the best possible way.

During this time God also began showing the author that the captives also need healing in the heart and in the spirit. Unforgiveness, jealousy, and fears of ancestral spirits abound in Tanzania. She had seen the gospel being received as information but lacking the power to transform peoples' hearts. God challenged the author to think more holistically about healing and evangelism.

### **Ministry Context**

The author's work in Tanzania is in remote village areas. The work is a partnership with Tanzanian pastors from all denominations. The specific groups being targeted are tribes in which less than two percent of the population have heard about Jesus and have decided to follow Him. Research shows that in Tanzania, there are still over twenty tribes in this condition.<sup>8</sup> They are still waiting for the gospel message. About half of the groups follow tribal religions and half follow Islam.

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<sup>8</sup>U. S. Center for World Missions, Joshua Project, *Tanzania Country Profile*, accessed April 28, 2014, <http://joshuaproject.net/countries/TZ>.

The author's relationships with nationals are widespread. There are connections with almost all denominations. The core effort is planned with a small group of senior pastors through a relational network. The network is called T.E.A.M. Africa (Teaching, Equipping, and Mobilizing Africa). T.E.A.M. Africa's goal is to see church planting movements begin in the unreached tribes in Tanzania. Everything is started, developed, and implemented through relationships. T.E.A.M. Africa's official leadership consists of the author and senior pastors from the Tanzanian Assembly of God (TAG) and the Baptist church. These relationships extend over many regions. The strongest work is in the most northern areas near the border with Kenya and the most southern region near the border with Mozambique.

### History

After about seventy years of German and then British rule, Tanzania became an independent nation on December 14, 1961. Julius Nyerere was instrumental in pushing this process forward. He naturally became the first president of Tanzania and served for twenty-four years, from 1961-1985. Today he is affectionately known as "the father of the nation." One of the things he is most remembered for is building unity among the people. He was determined to create a peaceful land, though Tanzania has over 130 distinct tribes. His mantra was, "One nation, many tribes."<sup>9</sup> He succeeded and Tanzanians will tell you this is one of the reasons for the difference between Tanzania and other countries like Rwanda, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Somalia and others.

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<sup>9</sup>Julius Nyerere, "In Tanzania, it was more than one hundred tribal units which lost their freedom; it was one nation that regained it" from *"Stability and Change in Africa"* (Speech, University of Toronto, Canada, 2 October 1969).

## Land and Resources

Tanzania is approximately the size of Texas, West Virginia, and Oklahoma.<sup>10</sup>

There are eight bordering countries: Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique. On its eastern border, Tanzania has a long coastline along the Indian Ocean. It is home to Africa's tallest mountain, Mt. Kilimanjaro, which stands at 19,340 feet. Tanzania also has the world's second largest fresh-water lake, Lake Victoria, and the second deepest lake, Lake Tanganyika.<sup>11</sup> Lake Victoria is the source of the White Nile, which is one of the three tributaries of the Nile River, which is the longest River in the world (4,132 miles). In addition, the land is uniquely blessed to be the home of the famous Serengeti Plain. This game park is arguably one of the finest in the world. Near the Serengeti is the most popular crater in the world, called the Ngorogoro Crater.

The land is also replete with natural resources. The land and water provide significant opportunity for fishing as well as agriculture. There are diamonds, gold, tanzanite (which is only found in Tanzania), rubies and other stones. The soil is rich with mineral resources such as nickel, copper, cobalt, tin, iron, and coal.<sup>12</sup> The resources in Tanzania would suggest it would be one of the wealthiest on the continent; however, this is not the case at all. Despite the natural resources, Tanzania is still recovering economically from the effects of socialism. Lack of capital has resulted in little

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>12</sup> World Bank, *Tanzania Country Brief* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2009), 15.

investment to ensure the proper management of resources. There has been slow progress. The United Nations overall human development index ranking for Tanzania in 2010 was 152 out of 169 countries.<sup>13</sup>

## People

The population of Tanzania is approximately forty million. When people are asked what they want during election time, the answer over and over again is, “peace.” Tanzanians are a peaceful people. They are very welcoming and gracious towards outsiders. It is very important to receive guests well as it they are seen as blessings.

The culture is relational and community-based. This carries over into all facets of life. If a person steals, his family members are considered to be thieves. On the other hand, if a person receives the opportunity to study abroad, then his family receives the opportunity to study abroad. This is also seen in the pervasive system of mutual assistance. A person is expected to help others financially because he will need help later. There is a revolving door of asking for money as well as asking for money to be returned.

Traditionally families have a lot of children. One clear reason for this is the belief that children are a blessing. Children are also inextricably linked to the identity of women. To be a woman you must have children. This cultural value creates immense pressure on young ladies. It also jeopardizes the family unit as well when there are problems with conceiving children.

Polygamy has been common traditionally and is still practiced. Men may have three or four wives. Each wife may have seven or more children. The kids are able to

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<sup>13</sup> United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Reports*, accessed May 10, 2014, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/TZA>.

help manage the land and animals. Families remain close and share the burdens of daily life across the extended family circles.

The culture has a high value on respect. Things must be done in a proper way. The elderly are highly respected. People of position must also be shown proper respect. Titles and positions are very important. To observe these rules with compliance is mandatory.

### Spirituality

The Tanzanian people have an extremely strong spirituality. Their belief in God is absolute. It is also common for people to say they have seen and know the power of Satan. Witchcraft is pervasive.

The existence of nominal Christians as well as Muslims is extensive. This must be considered when reviewing the research which breaks down the belief systems as follows: 54% Christian, 32% Islamic, 13% tribal religions, and 4% other.<sup>14</sup>

### Wellbeing

Two critical factors compromising the welfare of the people are education and health issues. After independence, education was on the rise. Though in recent years, free education has gone by the wayside and school fees deprive thousands of children from an education.

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<sup>14</sup> Jason Mandryk, *Operation World*, 7th ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica Publishing, 2010), 808.

HIV/AIDS is a serious threat as well. About 3.5% of the population is diagnosed as HIV positive.<sup>15</sup> The good news is that awareness and prevention measures are widespread. In addition, malaria is a pervasive struggle in Tanzania. It remains one of the major causes of sickness and death.<sup>16</sup> It is considered to be a significant obstacle to economic development as well as foreign investment in Tanzania.<sup>17</sup> Health care resources, financial as well as human resources, are limited for both of these health challenges.

Apart from disease, there are other challenges to overall wellbeing. Abusive situations for women and children are normal and go unchecked to a large degree. The welcoming smile and spirit does not reflect all that is in the heart and mind. When you ask people what they are really thinking about, they will tell you the concerns of life and how to survive. They wonder how they will make it on a daily basis. This is wearing on the mind, heart, spirit, and body.

### Influences

It seems there is an over-abundance of well-meaning organizations in Tanzania. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are everywhere. The impact of these NGOs is highly debatable. It is a popular and motivating idea to get involved in Africa. With Tanzania being a stable country, with a warm welcome to outsiders, and a plethora of

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<sup>15</sup> UNAID, HIV and AIDS estimates(2012), accessed 12 December 2013, <http://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/unitedrepublicoftanzania>.

<sup>16</sup> E.A. Makundi, L.E.G. Mboera, H.M. Malebo, et al. "Priority Setting on Malaria Interventions in Tanzania: Strategies and Challenges to Mitigate against the Intolerable Burden" in *Defining and Defeating the Intolerable Burden of Malaria III: Progress and Perspectives: Supplement to Volume 77(6) of American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, editors Breman J.G., Alilio M.S., White N.J., Northbrook, IL, American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene; 2007, December, 106.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 106.



tourist hot spots, the amount of international organizations as well as individual volunteers is quite extensive.

Tanzania is also not immune to the overall effects of modernization and globalization. This is seen in the most remote places you can reach in Tanzania. There are plenty of cell phones and Coca-Cola while schools, clinics, and clean water are lacking. There is no shortage of televisions, satellite dishes, and generators as people find a way to be connected to the world. News is paramount as is access to sports and entertainment.

### Tanzania's Relationship to the Area and the World

Tanzania has a unique position in East Africa. The country is arguably the most stable in the area. In addition, people quickly attest that Tanzanians are known to be much more welcoming to outsiders than the people of the surrounding countries. People are attracted to come and they are coming. Internationals as well as other Africans are prevalent.

Another key factor for Tanzania in the context of the surrounding area is language. Swahili is spoken in Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, Somalia, and Mozambique. Even though each nation has distinct differences, it still forms a bridge for communication. In addition, Swahili is growing as an international language, taught in more than one hundred universities, many of which are outside Africa, including Russia, Switzerland, Austria, China, Finland, and Mexico, and others; thus making Swahili likely the most widely taught African language in the world.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>M. M. Mulokozi, *Kiswahili as a National and International Language*, last modified February 9, 2004, accessed May 8, 2014, <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=h-swahili&month=0402&msg=HZRThv6QiHOSSVEOAdUCTA>.

### **Convergence**

As a missionary in Tanzania working among remote areas with little access to the gospel, the author has been learning much about cross-cultural evangelism. Her focus is the unreached tribes in Tanzania. These are areas where less than two percent of the tribe follows Jesus. The goal is to mobilize Tanzanian Christians to take the gospel to these areas.

After a few years of evangelism and training leaders, the author began to see the need for praying more for healing in the unreached villages. Her hope and belief was that the power of God through healing would open peoples' hearts to hear about the healer—Jesus. The author was concerned due to the incredible bondage which people are under in Tanzania. Sharing the gospel message without power is difficult in the unreached areas. To leave one tradition for another is not appealing to the tribal or Islamic unreached people. There truly seemed to be the need for signs and wonders to accompany the message.

In the midst of this struggle, the author sensed that these signs and wonders were not just for physical healing. A new idea emerged to bring healing to the hearts and minds of people in the unreached and not just healing to their physical bodies. God began to highlight over and over the need for wholeness and the biblical basis for bringing not just physical healing but healing of soul and spirit as well. This led to a pursuit of discovering and defining holistic healing with an evangelistic intent. The author is presently transitioning ministry values and activities to reflect this new paradigm. The goal is to

explore holistic healing evangelism among the unreached tribes in Tanzania. This is the author's motivation for this project.

### **Holistic Healing Evangelism**

The author has been thinking through holistic healing evangelism ideas and talking to many people from different healing streams. The new paradigm for evangelism will continue to include physical healing as a way of evangelizing. The additional component will be creating ways to bring truth and light to areas of bondage regarding the soul and spirit.

Over the last five years, the author has seen patterns relevant to this idea. They are: fear, especially regarding witchcraft, evil, and ancestral spirits; lying and deception; taking offenses, forgiveness, hatred, and reconciliation; pride and stubbornness. These are pervasive and foundational.

Naturally holistic healing evangelism is not the most common type of approach. As such, this project served as a laboratory to explore the model. The author is sure that, in time, solid tools will be refined which will provide meaningful and effective evangelistic strategies. Though the immediate context is the Sonjo tribe of Tanzania, the goal would be for the model to be beneficial in other unreached parts of the world.

It is also interesting to note the potential impact of this project on a larger scale. At the end of the day, in the areas of relief, rehabilitation, and development in other nations, many are asking, "What have we accomplished?" The author believes and has seen cases where material provision has been ineffective to deal with the inner poverty — poverty of soul and spirit. In Tanzania, the need for alleviating inner poverty dwarfs the

prevailing focus of alleviating material poverty. If there were approaches to deal with the root causes of corruption and stealing, which actually changed the hearts and minds of people, this would revolutionize community development and humanitarian aid. Tools which would touch these inner issues could add value across the board.

The author believes that the only way to alleviate inner poverty is through the light and life of Jesus and the truth in the Word. In this pursuit her dream is to see people healed in body, soul, and spirit. It is time for the captives to be freed and the prisoners released in places where witchcraft has controlled people for centuries.

The author is excited about releasing old paradigms and learning new ways to bring the good news to people with power and with evidence that the gospel has changed their lives. Her hope is that holistic healing evangelism will not only bring salvation and wholeness to individuals but it also will bring a positive change to culture and foster a more productive and healthy society.

## **Conclusion**

Tanzania is blessed to be a blessing. If any country could become a model for the continent of prosperity matched with generosity, it is Tanzania. Guests, neighboring countries, as well as refugees are welcome. The land is beautiful and peaceful. From this position, Tanzania has an advantage to provide healing and ministry to others.

At the end of the day, it must be realized that resources and wealth are not the problem. Tanzania is in fact not a poor country. We can continue to bring water and food but if we do that, when do we stop? There must be a way to see Tanzania rise. The nation is still young. Resources are plentiful. It is only the human resource which must be called

to account, inspired with hope, and challenged to bring the changes that are due. It will take clear intention and foresight to create sustainable change.

In parallel, those interested in humanitarian aid and missionary efforts must also mature. It is time to consider the impact of short-term assistance which leaves the people dependent. New efforts cannot be driven by self-interest and the gratification of “helping Africa.” Those ready to invest must recognize the imperative to learn the culture before fixing it. With that knowledge then they can adopt principles and adapt methods that will move the people towards greater self-governance and self-sustenance.

The author is committed to explore not just the external, physical deficits but also the overall human condition and how to bring light and truth into the whole fabric of society with an emphasis on those in the most desperate spiritual conditions. This is the author’s desire and the goal of her work in Tanzania and of this project.

With the backdrop set and the goal of the project in sight, the following section will provide the theoretical underpinnings which support the personal and practical ministry perspectives already shared.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

The reader now has a picture of the author's motivations regarding her work in Tanzania, along with insight into her journey to reach the field, surprises and challenges of ministry in the villages as well as her hopes for ways to bring a more powerful witness of Christ to those who have never heard. Now, the project will be placed in its proper context within the broader body of Christ. This will be done in three parts. First, the author's perspective and intentions will be evaluated against biblical truth. The first section below will clearly show that evangelism God's way includes healing of the body, soul and spirit.

Second, we err too often by ignoring history or choosing only selective history. It is better to search out a matter more freely with a broader history not only to justify a cause but to see how the cause has fared throughout history. Thus the second section will consider a historical review of healing of body, soul, and spirit as an inherent part of our evangelism.

Third, it is good to allow experts and academics to have a voice. In practical ministry, this is not the norm. As such, the third section will provide a theological foundation for healing of body, soul, and spirit as representing God's intention. These three foundational aspects—biblical, historical, and theological—form the theoretical framework for the project.

## Biblical Foundation

This biblical foundation section addresses the focus of evangelism. A missing component in traditional evangelism is a vision for wholeness in body, soul, and spirit. God's intention for whole, healthy people is evident in his own evangelistic efforts throughout Scripture; however, traditional evangelism has shifted the focus from wholeness to heaven. The typical evangelistic goal is for people to "accept Christ" and choose to "follow Him" so that they will escape hell and "go to heaven." This has several implications for this life. First, suffering is commonly seen as a trial to embrace rather than a loving gift from God to make one stronger. Second, emotional, mental, and physical problems are considered part of life and are subject to the care of doctors and counselors. Third, the cosmic battle between good and evil is God's responsibility.<sup>19</sup> The result is that evangelism has a primary concern for life after death. The goal is to believe correct doctrine to ensure going to heaven.

This section will show that God has a different central concern. God's revelation about Himself shows His unrelenting pursuit of the whole person in this life. His comprehensive goal is wholeness. This is defined as being in a right state as things were intended to be. It begins now. It applies to every aspect of creation and human existence. God's goal for wholeness includes people, the earth, and all created beings. It touches man's relationship with himself, others, God, and creation. The biblical foundation

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<sup>19</sup> The biblical record shows an active church co-laboring with God to establish His kingdom on earth. Jesus taught His followers to pray: "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven'" (Matt. 6:9-10); "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force" (Matt. 11:12); "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." (Matt. 16:18).

acknowledges the cosmic scope of God's concern but it limits the discussion to the relationship between evangelism and wholeness.

The biblical-thematic emphasis on wholeness means that evangelism must proclaim this holistic message of deliverance and restoration. Salvation is not only about going to heaven. It is also about living in health with God's light, truth, and freedom touching every part of life. It is for this life and life after death. God modeled this in the Old Testament and New Testament through healing of emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual sickness. To know this God is to know a God who wants to bring peace and health to the physical body, the mind, the emotions, the heart, and the spirit.

Throughout God's story, healing is a motif for His unyielding pursuit of wholeness. The healing acts of God are pervasive throughout the Bible. God's evangelism is interwoven with His healing hand and heart. This is seen in His mighty acts of the Old Testament, the life of Jesus, and Jesus' followers in the New Testament. It is natural to understand why Jesus instructed His followers to continue making God known as He had demonstrated. This is because the heart of God has not changed.<sup>20</sup>

The healing motif remains relevant today. Healing of body, soul, and spirit remains an expression of God's heart for His creation. He has chosen healing as a way to make Himself known. This is the heart of evangelism—making God known. God provided a way for this to continue after Christ through the church by the power of the Holy Spirit. Today's evangelism must present this truth, create hope, and deliver power to free people to live productive and healthy lives.

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<sup>20</sup> "For I, the Lord, do not change" (Mal. 3:6); "Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8).



## Wholeness of Body, Soul, and Spirit

The overview of the Old Testament and New Testament shows a consistent theme of the whole person in relationship with creator God. Nothing is disconnected or untouched by God's love. This means then that the whole person is the object of evangelism. The light and truth, the good news about Jesus, is intended to impact the whole human experience. Wilkinson even argues that this theme is so pervasive in Scripture that "in the widest sense of the phrase, 'human wholeness' or health is the main topic of the Bible."<sup>21</sup> Middleton and Gorman agree with the implication for the evangelistic message: "The most fundamental meaning of salvation in Scripture is God's deliverance of those in a situation of need from that which impedes their well-being, resulting in their *restoration to wholeness*."<sup>22</sup>

This is the message the evangelist must offer. God sees the need. He has the power to deliver. He wants to restore to wholeness. This paints a broad context for the following sections which demonstrate God's evangelistic heart and effort to restore wholeness. He begins with Yahweh as Healer in the Old Testament. He then reveals the ultimate source of wholeness through Jesus, *Yeshua*—Yahweh saves—in the New Testament.<sup>23</sup> Lastly, with the Holy Spirit operating through His followers, His healing power continues. Wholeness is the abounding theme.

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<sup>21</sup> John Wilkinson, *The Bible and Healing, A Medical and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 7.

<sup>22</sup> J. Richard Middleton and Michael L. Gorman, "Salvation," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, vol. 5. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009), 45.

<sup>23</sup> Myers, A. C., *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 573. The given name Jesus means "savior"; it is the Greek equivalent of Jeshua (Heb. *yēšuaʿ*, from *yēhōšuaʿ*, "Yahweh saves" [= Joshua]). Christ is a title, indicating that he is the "anointed one," the Messiah (from Heb. *māšiah*). Although the name Jesus was common in Hellenistic-Roman Palestine, only Jesus Christ

## Restoration to Wholeness in the Old Testament

### *God is the Healer*

The first self-revelation of God is found in Ex. 15:26, “I am the Lord your Healer.” In the Near East world of paganism and polytheism, every culture had a common problem: they needed a healer. The deities were expected to deal with issues and bring healing. Brown clarifies that it is against this predominant view of other healing deities that God provides His first self-revelation. He was declaring, “I am your Healer,” not other deities or powers.<sup>24</sup>

This has a broader meaning than just “God heals.”<sup>25</sup> Healing is not limited to something God does sometimes or for a certain period. Rather it is a revelation of who God is. It is not God verses medicine. It is God verses any other spiritual power. This was important for the Hebrew people because in their pagan surroundings, the expectation of healing was inextricably linked to the expectations of deities.

In the culture of that day, the idea of a healer/deliverer was common. One example is the Ugaritic word, *rapi’u*, which means “physician, healer, savior” and

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embodied the full sense of the name, by saving his people from their sins. The name was not arbitrarily given by Joseph and Mary, but was divinely chosen and revealed to them (Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:31) as most appropriate for the Savior of the world. In the biblical accounts Jesus is usually called “Jesus of Nazareth” (e.g., 24:19), “Jesus, Son of David” (Mark 10:47), “the Nazarene” (14:67), or “the son of Joseph” (John 1:45). By far the most common designation used by biblical writers was simply “Jesus.” The compound Jesus Christ occurs only five times in the Gospels but is more common in Acts and the Epistles.

<sup>24</sup> Michael L. Brown, *Israel’s Divine Healer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 29-30. Brown argues that the more meaningful translation is “I am the Lord your healer,” as opposed to “I am the Lord who heals you.” The Hebrew for “healer” is *rope* which stems from the root, *rp’*. This root had a broad range of usage meaning “to restore, make whole.” The fuller meaning is that God is the one who makes you whole. Versions with the equivalent of “I am the Lord who heals you” include: NIV, KJV. Versions with the equivalent of “I am the Lord your Healer” include NASB.

<sup>25</sup> Brown, *Israel’s Divine Healer*, 30.

referred to the god of Baal.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, Brown stresses that in the Near East cultures of the Hebrew peoples' world, it would be impossible to conceive of a god who did not heal.<sup>27</sup> Whereas other deities of the day could themselves suffer from setback, constraint, and even disease, the Hebrew God was different. He had no constraints, no sickness, and no setbacks.<sup>28</sup> God was establishing Himself not just as the God who heals but the God of all gods with healing a given part of His nature and intention.

### *Scope of Wholeness*

In the Old Testament, the primary word for healing is *rapa*. It means, "to restore, make whole."<sup>29</sup> The root occurs sixty-seven times as a verb and nineteen times as a noun with every instance referring to "restoring a wrong, sick, broken, or deficient condition to its original and proper state."<sup>30</sup>

Some examples of the *rp*' root usage show the breadth of meaning: physical healing (2 Ki. 20:5), repairing the broken altar (1 Ki. 18:30), restoration of health to the land (2 Chron. 7:14), healing of leprosy (Num. 12:13), healing the soul from sin (Ps. 41:10), transforming water so that it is drinkable (2 Ki. 2:21-22), fixing broken pottery (Jer. 19:11), healing the broken-hearted (Ps. 147:3), healing of faithlessness (Jer. 33:2),

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>27</sup> Brown, *Israel's Divine Healer*, 53.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 77-78.

<sup>29</sup> M. L. Brown, "Rapa" in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterwick, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, vol. 13. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 596.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 597.

healing of apostasy (Hos. 14:4), healing of a nation (Jer. 51:8-9) and healing of barren wombs (Gen. 20:17).

This shows the progression from, “God *alone* is Healer,” to “God heals *all* afflictions.” To put this another way, the extensive usage of *rp*’ shows that in the Old Testament there is no distinction as to the source of the problem.<sup>31</sup> The solution remains the same—Yahweh is Healer. This breadth of healing application gives meaning to how Israel viewed God as Healer. There was clearly the sense of comprehensive healing or “wholeness.” With the root meaning, “to restore, heal, and make right” and the objects of healing including body, spirit, soul, land, water, cities and nations, God is expressing that His intention for man is wholly holistic. It is not just of a person, but a city; not just of a city but a nation; not just of the body, but the spirit and soul; and not just of people but of the land, water and crops. God wants to make all things right. His goal is restoration and wholeness. This is God’s nature which is best described by the Hebrew word, *salom*.

The idea of God’s *salom* is a characteristic theme of God’s nature in the biblical record. The noun *salom* is used 237 times in the Old Testament.<sup>32</sup> The root *slm* is traced to the earliest uses of the Semitic languages and has such an inherent depth of meaning and history that Stendebach states that it must be seen as an “elemental aspect of human life.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> F. Graber and D. Muller, “Heal,” in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: MI, 1975-1978), 167.

<sup>32</sup> Stendebach, “Salom,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterwick, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, vol. 15. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 15.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

Stendebach's survey of *salom* covers its usage in nine near east languages<sup>34</sup> as well as the interpretation of many scholars.<sup>35</sup> His summation is that *salom* cannot be captured by a single English word. He proposes that *salom* be best understood as spreading a continuum between "wholeness" and "sufficiency." It is a "comprehensive expression denoting all that the people of Near East wish for as the substance of blessing."<sup>36</sup>

The people of Israel became well acquainted with the *salom* of God and the lack of it in their lives. The expectation God created in the minds of the Hebrew people stuck with them during their cycles of faithfulness and disobedience from the Exodus to the exile. Because they knew God's *salom* and His heart, this is what they dreamt of during the times of exile. Their prophetic hope demonstrates the holistic expectations they had of God's coming deliverance. Just as their disobedience afflicted the heart, mind, soul and body, so the restoration to wholeness must do the same. Isaiah 53:4-5 speaks of the depth of their need and hope, "Surely our *griefs* He Himself bore, And our *sorrows* He carried; . . . But He was pierced through for our *transgressions*, He was crushed for our *iniquities*; The chastening for our *well-being* fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are *healed*." As Brown states, the restoration of Isaiah 53, "...must be viewed in the broadest possible terms. The prophetic hope was for the whole man to be wholly healed."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Salom* surveyed in thirteen languages: Hebrew, Ugaritic, Akkadian, Babylonian, Neo-Babylonian, Middle Assyrian, Old Babylonian, Phoenician/Punic, Aramaic, Syriac, Old South Arabic, Arabic, and Egyptian, Stendebach, 15-16.

<sup>35</sup> See a summary of scholarship in Stendebach, 18-19.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>37</sup> Brown, *Israel's Divine Healer*, 242.

### *God's Nature and Evangelistic Heart*

As the God of salvation, the one who bestows *salom*, God is on a mission to be known and to be distinguished from all other competing powers. In the context of God's nature and salvation message, *salom* can be seen as a "profoundly positive concept associated with the notions of intactness, wholeness, and well-being of the world and of humanity. It must be satisfied when it is compromised or violated."<sup>38</sup> God intends things to be in a right order. The compromise to this right state must be addressed and corrected. The ultimate goal is the right order between all sectors of society and all relationships. Without this desired state, one cannot speak of *salom*.<sup>39</sup>

Healing is needed, sought, and expected for God's people. His healing power that touches body, soul, and spirit restores the *salom* of God. Gaiser stresses that healing in the Bible involves far more than a change in symptoms but will also "involve body and mind, soul and spirit, as well as relationship and community, ethics and justice. To be healed, finally, is to be complete (*salom*)."<sup>40</sup>

Healing and the *salom* of God go hand in hand. They capture the salvation message of the Old Testament. God's intentions are seen through His self-revelation, His tenacious restoration, and faithful interaction with His people. As Sovereign, God can do anything, but He wants to bring life: "I have no pleasure in death, so *turn, and live*" (Ez. 18:32). Man also has free will but God wants man to choose life: "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity...So *choose life* in order that you

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<sup>38</sup>Stendebach, 19.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Frederick J. Gaiser, *Healing in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 243.

may live, and your descendants, by loving the Lord your God, by obeying his voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days” (Deut. 30:14-15). Both wills are intertwined without recourse. God cannot say, “Oh, look at man doing his own thing.” Nor can man say, “Oh, look at God doing His own thing.” No, God and man are linked eternally and are mutually interdependent by design. God’s sovereignty does not prescribe events. It describes the ongoing interweaving of His hand in history and His faithful interaction with His creation. God’s story continues in the New Testament with the same message of healing and salom. The healing and holistic restoration of Jesus echoes that of Yahweh in the Old Testament.

### Restoration to Wholeness in the New Testament

The nature of God in the Old Testament is paralleled by the life and message of Jesus in the gospels. As the writer of Hebrews gracefully expresses: Jesus is the “radiance of His [God] glory” and the “exact representation of His nature” (Heb. 1:3). Jesus himself claims that He only does what He sees His Father doing (John 5:19) and that He only speaks what His Father has told him (John 12:50, 8:28). Jesus claims, “I and the Father are one,” (John 10:30). Philip asks Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us. Jesus answered: ‘Don’t you know me, Philip... anyone who has seen me has seen the Father....The words that I say to you are not just my own. Rather it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work’” (Jn. 14:8-10). Jesus claims, “By myself I can do nothing; for I judge only as I hear...for I seek not to please myself but Him who sent me” (Jn. 5:30). He seeks to please the Father and He submits to His Father’s

instructions, “but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me” (Jn. 14:31).

### *Jesus Heals*

In Luke 4 Jesus introduces Himself with a quote from Isaiah 61:1-2. He knows the prophetic hope. He announces that He is the one who has come to restore. In Luke 4:18-21, Jesus says:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.” . . . And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’

These intentions directly parallel the introduction of Yahweh as Healer in the Old Testament. The Healer is one who restores and makes things right. Jesus has also come to set things right and restore what is broken. Jesus’ announcement introduces a new season of God’s kingdom timeline. Jesus is not vague: “Today this is fulfilled,” communicates a distinct turning point in God’s story. Immanuel, “God with us,”<sup>41</sup> has come to deliver. This time it is not just for Israel but for all of God’s people.<sup>42</sup>

For three years Jesus went about proclaiming and demonstrating what He was announcing that day. This is captured vividly by Matthew:

“Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various

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<sup>41</sup> cf. Is. 7:1, 8; Matt. 1:23, “Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which translated means, ‘God with us.’”

<sup>42</sup> See Isaiah 49.



diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them” (Matt. 4:23-24).

This new era in God’s redemptive plan became the core of Jesus’ teaching: the kingdom of God. He taught about the kingdom and He demonstrated the coming of the kingdom with signs and wonders. Jesus expressed two aspects of this kingdom: it is present and it is coming. This inauguration with continuation is referred to as the already/not yet of the kingdom. Many passages highlight the tension. After casting out a demon, Jesus explains, “But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Lk. 11:20), “Today this is fulfilled in your hearing” (Lk. 4:18). “Repent, for the kingdom is at hand” (Matt. 3:2). “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:14-15).

On the other hand, the kingdom is coming. This is seen in Jesus’ prayer: “And He said to them, ‘When you pray, say: ... Your kingdom come’” (Lk. 11:2). Jesus uses many parables to show the idea that the kingdom will keep growing: the growing mustard seed (Matt. 13:31-32) and the small amount of leaven that affects the whole loaf after time (Matt. 13:33-35).

Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom went hand in hand with his demonstration of the kingdom. This is in fact the account of the gospels—Jesus’ teachings and His acts of ministry. In the gospels, these two ideas, proclamation and demonstration, are grouped as discourse and narrative respectively. Wilkinson offers a perspective on how much of the

narrative material is devoted to healing and miracles: forty percent in Matthew, forty percent in Mark, thirty-five percent in Luke, and thirty-three percent in John.<sup>43</sup>

Wilkinson's analysis of all the healing accounts of Jesus shows that twenty-six accounts involved an individual and twelve accounts involve groups of people.<sup>44</sup> These accounts paint a picture of the restoration that Jesus came to bring. Most of Jesus' miracles restored wholeness of body, soul, and spirit. There was great variety in the physical healing – blindness,<sup>45</sup> deafness,<sup>46</sup> dumbness,<sup>47</sup> leprosy,<sup>48</sup> crippled/injured conditions,<sup>49</sup> paralytics,<sup>50</sup> fevers,<sup>51</sup> dropsy<sup>52</sup> and other issues.<sup>53</sup> He delivered people from demonic oppression which assaulted the mind.<sup>54</sup> He also demonstrated his ultimate power over death by raising dead people back to life.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Wilkinson, 65.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>45</sup> Two blind men, Matt. 9:27-31; Blind man at Bethsaida, Mk. 8:22-26, man born blind, Jn. 9:1-41; Blind Bartimaeus, Matt. 20:29-34, Mk. 10:46-52; Lk. 18:35-43.

<sup>46</sup> Deaf and mute, Mk. 7:31-37.

<sup>47</sup> Dumbness, Mk. 7:31-37, Matt. 9:32-34, Matt. 12:22-24, Lk. 11:14-16.

<sup>48</sup> Leprosy, Lk. 17:11-19, Matt. 8:1-4, Mk. 1:40-45, Lk. 5:12-15,

<sup>49</sup> Crippled conditions, Matt. 12:10-13, Mk. 3:1-6, Lk. 6:6-11, Lk. 22:50-51, Lk. 13:11-17.

<sup>50</sup> Paralytics, Jn. 5:1-16, Matt. 9:1-8, Mk. 2:1-12, Lk. 5:18-26.

<sup>51</sup> Fevers, Matt. 8:14-15, Mk. 1:30-31, Lk. 4:38-39.

<sup>52</sup> Nobleman's son near death, Jn. 4:46-54; woman with flow of blood, Matt. 9:20-22, Mk. 5:25-34, Lk. 8:43-48; woman with spirit of infirmity, Lk. 13:11-17.

<sup>53</sup> Dumb demoniac, Matt. 9:32-34; blind and dumb demoniac, Matt. 12:22-24; Lk. 11:14-16; Synagogue demoniac, Mk. 1:21-18, Lk. 4:31-37; Syrophenician girl, Matt. 15:22-28, Mk. 7:24-30.

<sup>54</sup> Lk. 7:11-18 raises widows son in the city of Nain, Jn. 11:1-46, raises Lazarus who had been dead four days; Matt. 9:18-19, 23-26 raises Jarius' daughter (Mk. 5:22-24, 35-43; Lk. 8:41-42, 49-56).

From a simple overview of the record, a pattern is evident in Jesus' healing. It was normative—no special appointment or occasion was required. It was available—He offered it freely to all. It was simple—Jesus spoke and healing happened. It was holistic—it revealed spiritual truth, healed the physical frame, renewed the mind, restored the broken-hearted, freed those held captive to evil hearts.

Healing was frequent for Jesus as the analysis shows. It is understandable that when the gospel writer sat to reflect on what Jesus actually did, the observation consistently was that Jesus healed. It is better said that healing is who Jesus is, not something He did. This mirrors the image of Yahweh as Healer in the Old Testament. It needs no explanation. Rather it is expected given that God's nature does not change. Jesus is one with Yahweh. Both Jesus and Yahweh decided that healing is one of the ways they would make themselves known. As noted earlier, healing is a motif that demonstrates God's desire for man to have the vitality of life for which he was created. As creator, God knows what man is to be. He faithfully demonstrates the power to overcome that which impedes man from flourishing as intended.

Jesus' miracles show this concern for spirit, soul, and body. Jesus touches the whole man while at the same time teaching people how to live holy and moral lives. To devalue His power to heal over the safer character topics such as generosity and forgiveness is neither wise nor beneficial. Rather it is good to take Jesus' miracles as deliberate steps of "evangelizing." He directly tells people to believe in Him because of his miraculous works: "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves" (Jn. 14:11). Then He says again, "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not

believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father” (Jn. 10:37-38).

### *Scope of Wholeness*

A key for understanding Jesus’ intention in healing is found in the Greek word, *sozo*, which is often used for healing. The verb *sozo* was widely used in the culture. It generally referred to “deliverance from natural dangers or afflictions by an acute divine or human intervention.”<sup>56</sup> In the gospels it also has a broad usage. It generally meant “made whole” or “made well” and applied to “deliverance from danger, disease and death, both physical and spiritual.”<sup>57</sup>

The New Testament reality of *sozo* is answering the question, “What has God done (or what will God do) to rescue and restore humanity, and what must we do to benefit from that salvation?”<sup>58</sup> In effect, to receive salvation—*sozo*—means to enter the *Missio Dei*, the mission of God—to become part of God’s corporate cosmic plan.

At the same time, salvation and restoration is personal. Each person’s situation meets the *sozo* of God: the spiritually dead, the paralytic, the woman hemorrhaging blood, the demoniac, the unclean lepers, the dead, and all who in fact have a need to be restored in body, soul, and spirit. Middleton and Gorman identify this “cluster of realities as the absence of shalom – the reality of captivity and brokenness contrary to God’s intended wholeness. These portrayals of the human condition indicate how important it is

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<sup>56</sup> Wilkinson, 80.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Middleton and Gorman, 55.

to understand salvation in the NT as more than rescue from sin, wrath, or death; salvation is restoration to wholeness.”<sup>59</sup>

Examples of *sozo* in the New Testament illustrate the breadth of meaning. *Sozo* as forgiveness/spiritual healing—“That if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead you shall be saved (*sozo*)” (Rom. 10:9). Jesus told the woman, called a sinner, who wiped Jesus’ feet with perfume in the house of the Pharisee, “Your faith has saved (*sozo*) you; go in peace” (Lk. 7:50).<sup>60</sup>

*Sozo* as physical healing—the woman who had been hemorrhaging for twelve years touched Jesus and was healed. He said to her, “‘Daughter take courage your faith has made you well (*sozo*).’ At once the woman was made well (*sozo*)” (Matt. 9:22).<sup>61</sup> Blind Bartimaeus cries out to Jesus for healing, “And answering him, Jesus said, ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’ And the blind man said to Him, ‘Rabboni, I want to regain my sight!’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Go; your faith has made you well (*sozo*).’ Immediately he regained his sight” (Mk. 10:52).

*Sozo* as deliverance/healing of the soul □—“And those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well (*sozo*)” (Luke 8:36). Paul relies upon the *sozo* of God to protect him, “The Lord will rescue (*sozo*) me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom” (2 Tim. 4:18).

The extensive use of *sozo* shows that healing, exorcism, forgiveness, and believing the revelation of Jesus Christ are all seen as acts of salvation. Middleton and

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>60</sup> cf. Acts 4:12, Eph. 2:8, (*sozo* for forgiveness of sins).

<sup>61</sup> cf. Mk. 6:56, Acts 4:9, 14:9 (*sozo* for physical healing).

Gorman argue that the text is so clear on the comprehensive meaning of *sozo* that “failure to translate these texts with forms of the English verb ‘save’ perpetuates the theological error that Jesus’ restoration of people to physical wholeness is something other than salvation. As in the OT, however, the Gospel writers do not allow for salvation to be understood in purely ‘spiritual’ terms. Salvation by Jesus is restoration to physical, spiritual, and social wholeness.”<sup>62</sup>

This comprehensive touch of God is portrayed well in the story of the ten lepers. In Luke 17, ten lepers cried out to Jesus from a distance for healing. They were not healed on the spot but rather, they were healed as they went:

As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; and they raised their voices, saying, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’ When He saw them, He said to them, ‘Go and show yourselves to the priests.’ And as they were going, they were cleansed. Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan (vs. 14-17).

The priest was the one who declared them clean or not. If declared clean, they would be able to rejoin the community. Otherwise they were removed from interaction with people. Leprosy was much more than a physical problem. It was isolation which affects the soul and the spirit as well. Jesus directing them to the priest went far beyond physical healing. It moved into the realm of healing of the soul and spirit. Jesus healed them on their way but also used the priestly custom to bring further restoration that touched the soul. They would be validated, accepted, and invited back into community. The need to belong would be satisfied by declaration of the priest.

The other interesting note is that all ten were cleansed but the one who came back to show gratefulness was the one Jesus declared to be made whole (*sozo*): “And as they

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<sup>62</sup> Middleton and Gorman, 56.

were going, they were cleansed, (*katharizo*, “make clean”),<sup>63</sup> ‘Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine — where are they? Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?’ And He said to him, ‘Stand up and go; your faith has made you well (*sozo*)’” (vs. 17-19). Cleansing was physical but *sozo*— the restoration to wholeness — went beyond the physical and touched the soul.<sup>64</sup> The man cried out. He was loud. He fell down at Jesus’ feet. He was overwhelmed.

Peter is another perfect example of Jesus restoring the whole person. After Jesus’ arrest in the garden and Peter’s denial of Christ, Peter was devastated. There is no natural way that this man would be the same man preaching with power and anointing in Acts 2. Peter needed to be restored to wholeness. Jesus asks Peter three times, “Do you love me?” The last time Peter is distraught and says, “‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Tend My sheep’” (John 21:17).

Peter goes on to question Jesus about John but Jesus takes it straight back to Peter again. There is no place to turn and no one else to consider, just Jesus and Peter, eye to eye. They both knew the history, the great times, and the colossal failures. It was the time to decide the future. Peter’s future was on the line: would it be defined by his love for Christ or by his tragic rejection of Christ in the past? Jesus chose love and Peter understood. Only after that was Peter in a position to take care of others. Peter was restored to wholeness.

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<sup>63</sup> Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 488.

<sup>64</sup> Kris Vollaton, “*Healing and Wholeness*” (podcast of sermon, Bethel Church, Redding, CA, April 22, 2012), accessed May 1, 2012, <http://www.ibethel.org/podcast>.

Another example is the woman caught in adultery in John 8. The scribes and Pharisees bring her to Jesus right in the middle of the temple court. They came to test Jesus but Jesus had something else in mind. He diffused the situation by proposing that the one who had not sinned could be the first to stone the woman. The accusers walked away. Jesus then turned to the woman, “‘Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?’ She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said, ‘I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more’” (Jn. 8:10-11). He ministered wholeness to her spirit, soul, and body: she was not stoned (protection for her body); she was not condemned (healing for her soul); and she was instructed to stop sinning (truth for her spirit).

#### *Jesus' Nature and Evangelistic Heart*

As stated above, Jesus is the exact representation of the Father. He and the Father have one message—wholeness. From the passages on *sozo* and body, soul, and spirit, it is evident that Jesus' message extended beyond the spiritual condition of man. His *sozo* and salvation is for the whole person. Bill Johnson, pastor of Bethel Church in Redding, CA, agrees that salvation is clearly aimed at touching the whole person—spirit, soul, and body.<sup>65</sup> In Jesus' prayer the same message is revealed in “deliver us from evil.” As Johnson explains, the word for evil is *poneros* meaning “pain,” coming from the root *penes*, meaning “poor.” Thus Jesus came to destroy evil/sin, pain/sickness and the bondage of the poor/poverty.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Bill Johnson and Randy Clark, *The Essential Guide to Healing* (Minneapolis, MN: Chosen Books, 2011), 120.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.



God is still working to deliver people from pain today. His intentions have not changed. This is the full gospel, the complete good news, the evangelistic message: deliverance from a real crisis and restoration to wholeness. This is the salvation or *sozo* that Jesus introduced and commissioned us to continue.

### Restoration to Wholeness Today

God's witness continues after Jesus through the Holy Spirit. This is by design. Jesus is clear that the disciples are to continue the ministry He modeled for them. He instructs the disciples to follow the Rabbinic teacher-student model, which calls for the student to imitate the teacher. This is the basis for the intimate relationship between Jesus and His disciples. It allowed the instruction to be passed down orally.

Williams stresses also that the "teaching was to be lived out by being with the teacher and imitating his life."<sup>67</sup> Though Greek and Hebrew worldviews varied, on this point they were the same. Greeks also shared this model of teacher-student. Williams notes that for both Jews and Greeks, the "goal of this intimate relationship is to reproduce the teacher's life in his pupil."<sup>68</sup> Jesus was keenly aware of this. He makes no attempts to expect otherwise from His relationship with His disciples. In fact, He explicitly calls for the disciples to consider him a model and to continue what He has started. Jesus said, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (Jn. 20:21). The things Jesus was commissioned to do (Lk. 4:18-20, Matt. 4:23-24), He commissions His disciples to do: "These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: '... go to the lost

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<sup>67</sup> Don Williams, "Following Christ's Example: A Biblical View of Discipleship," in *The Kingdom and the Conflict*, eds. Gary S. Greig and Kevin N. Springer (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), 177.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 178.

sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.” (Matt. 10:5-8). He sends out the seventy to do the same: “Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, .... ‘Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’” (Lk. 10:1,8-9).

Jesus prepared them to continue after He was gone, “But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you” (Jn. 16:7). Jesus told them what to expect, “Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (Jn. 14:12).

Jesus knew they needed help for their task, “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth” (Jn. 14:16-17), “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you” (John 14:26). Jesus also stresses the oneness between Himself, the Father, and the Spirit, “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me.” (Jn. 15:26). The Father, Son, and Spirit have one nature and evangelistic message. The witness of Yahweh and Jesus continued with the Holy Spirit through the disciples.

The student-teacher model also envisions the continuation of modeling and reproducing. This is clear in the Matthew commission: “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore

and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:18-20). Paul affirms this idea, “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).<sup>69</sup>

The disciples, apostles, and other leaders in the New Testament got the message, took the challenge, and carried on the evangelistic task with both proclamation and demonstration of the whole gospel. The healing motif continued. Acts and the epistles provide the best understanding of how to interpret the commission of Jesus. Clearly His followers continued what He modeled and did what He instructed them to do. It is interesting also that the physician, Luke, was the one to record these healings. Healing and miracles in Acts are attributed to the apostles as well as lay leaders.<sup>70</sup> They include deliverance from demonic oppression (Acts 8:7, 16:16-18), physical healing (Acts 3:1-10, 9:17-19, 32-25, 14:8-11, 28:8), raising the dead (Acts 9:36-41, 20:9-12), healing of groups (Acts 5:15-16, 8:6-7, 19:11-12, 28:9), and other signs and wonders (Acts 2:43, 5:12, 6:8, 14:3).

The epistles indicate the continuation of healing ministry and concern for the whole person. James is explicit, “Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

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<sup>69</sup> cf. 1 Cor. 11:1, Philip. 4:9, 1 Thess. 1:5-6.

<sup>70</sup> Healing through lay leaders, Ananias, Acts 9:17-19; through Philip, Acts 8:6-7.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed” (James 5:14-16).<sup>71</sup> John’s epistle also shows the desire for wholeness, “Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.”

The New Testament writers had a vision for believers overcoming the battlefields of the mind and emotions, being freed from physical and mental affliction, and experiencing overall well-being. Wilkinson recognizes the clarity with which the book of Acts and the epistles express the whole gospel, “Healing the sick was part of the gospel which the apostles and the Church were commissioned to preach... The gospel included the healing and salvation of the whole human being in body, mind, and spirit. It is the same gospel that is still entrusted to the Church today.”<sup>72</sup>

#### Biblical Foundation Conclusion

Through God’s self-revelation, it is clear that God’s plan is to restore the body, soul, and spirit of man. The whole point of evangelism is to make God known. This requires that we make the full disclosure. Too much evangelism has reduced the salvation message to eternal life and what happens after death. Johnson makes reference to our traditional evangelistic goal as “partial salvation” and proposes that we are more confident to believe for a person’s conversion than for their healing. He substantiates the need to redefine our evangelistic message: “But what would have happened if healing

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<sup>71</sup> cf. 1 Cor. 12-14, Gal. 3:5.

<sup>72</sup> Wilkinson, 65.

and deliverance had been included in the Church's definition of salvation, as it is in Scripture? I believe our faith for both realms would be similar.”<sup>73</sup>

A more biblical paradigm for evangelism will include the ultimate impact of coming to faith in Christ and how that affects eternity, but it will also include the self-revelation of God as healer. It will inform that healing is not limited to the physical body, but applies to the whole person. This is shown consistently throughout the Word: evangelism that boldly offers people freedom from fear, shame, guilt, addiction, brokenness, sorrow, hatred, deception, and all other evil and vices. These powers are broken through Jesus Christ. Biblical salvation is forgiveness of sins along with replacing the control of sin and its effects with the restoration and wholeness of a good God.

To say healing is not for today is like saying God does not reveal Himself today. This cannot be true as the whole Bible is a record of God's desire to be known with a healing motif throughout. Therefore if God is still revealing himself, then He is still restoring the whole person. Healing is inextricably linked to the story of God. Our evangelism must tell this story—the whole story. God intended to have whole people and He has a plan to restore wholeness through the name of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. The more evangelism expresses the biblical intent to heal and restore wholeness in body, soul, and spirit the more it will represent the God of the good news.

### **Historical Foundation**

As the biblical foundation section demonstrated, God is actively interacting with mankind corporately and individually. His desired outcome is wholeness. Healing of

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<sup>73</sup> Johnson and Clark, 121.

body, soul, and spirit is a motif expressing His goodness and intentions for man. The example God set in Jesus to break the bondage and free captives is not just a spiritual aspiration. There is freedom from sickness and the bondage of the mind and emotions. It is possible to have integrity of thought, belief, and action. There is power to live by the Spirit and not the flesh. This is life in the kingdom.

This historical foundation section looks back through history to discover how the church has been faithful to be ministers of this holistic gospel. There are good times and bad times. Reflecting and wrestling with the ebb and flow of the church as she has faltered and risen in her evangelistic journey provides invaluable insight into the church's position today. This overview of history will substantiate the need for intentional focus on staying true to the biblical record in the evangelistic mindset and efforts of the twenty-first century.

#### AD 100 – 325: The Early Church Remains Faithful

In the beginning, there was an almost seamless transition from Jesus to the New Testament church to the early church. This was documented by key leaders during this period, which include Justin Martyr (100-165), Ireneaus (120-202), Origin (185-254), and Gregory of Neocaesarea (213-270). A plethora of accounts show a continuation of apostolic mission powered through the gifts of Holy Spirit.<sup>74</sup> A genuine concern for people was demonstrated through the ministry of word and deed. Gregory is an example as seen in this reference to his life:

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<sup>74</sup> For detailed thread of the Holy Spirit's gifts in history see Jeff Doles, *Miracles and Manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the History of the Church* (Seffner, FL: Walking Barefoot Ministries), 2008.

By the superabundance of gifts, wrought in him by the Spirit in all power and in signs and in marvels, he was styled a second Moses by the very enemies of the Church. Thus in all he through grace accomplished, alike by word and deed, a light seemed ever to be shining, token of the heavenly power from the unseen which followed him.<sup>75</sup>

The growth surmounted obstacles on every side. The newly founded Christian faith was first of all illegal. Persecution and death were realities. In addition the leadership was shared and widespread. Followers of Christ were blessed to have to pay a price for their beliefs; for in so doing, believers were shown to be sincere. Questioning the continuing power of the Holy Spirit did not enter their minds. Nor did they question God's desired intent and His means. They knew firsthand the power of God to heal, deliver, and restore people to their right mind. Freely they had received and freely they gave to others. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, they were busy bringing wholeness to people. Accounts are widespread of the relentless commitment of valuing the body, soul, and spirit. Deliverance was so normative for the lay people that the bishop in Rome complained that those performing exorcism outnumbered the priests.<sup>76</sup>

This ministry to deliver people from bondage and spiritual darkness became even more intentional as the church began to realize that Christ's return may not be as imminent as they had anticipated. This shift opened their eyes to the lost world around them. Ministry to the pagan world increased. The power of deliverance and healing offered by the church was like fresh water for those whose other diviners and deities had failed. Justin Martyr gives testimony to this: "For numberless demoniacs throughout the

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<sup>75</sup> Jeff Doles, *Miracles and Manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the History of the Church* (Seffner, FL: Walking Barefoot Ministries, 2008), 32.

<sup>76</sup> Morton Kelsey, *Healing and Christianity: A Classic Study* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 122.

whole world, and in your city, many of our Christian men exorcising them in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, have healed and do heal, rendering helpless and driving the possessing devils out of the men, though they could not be cured by all the other exorcists, and those who used incantations and drugs.”<sup>77</sup>

God’s goal of restoring wholeness was working. Many were coming to faith as they saw and experienced not only the power of God but His goodness. Irenaeus records the degree to which miraculous deliverance was seen as a baseline of the Christian with evangelistic intent:

For some do certainly and truly drive out devils, so that those who have thus been cleansed from evil spirits frequently both believe [in Christ], and join themselves to the Church. Others have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions, and utter prophetic expressions. Others still, heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole. Yea, moreover, as I have said, the dead even have been raised up, and remained among us for many years. And what shall I more say? It is not possible to name the number of the gifts which the Church, [scattered] throughout the whole world, has received from God, in the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>78</sup>

The connection between the power and goodness of God leading to faith in God is clearly seen. People were desperate and God’s people delivered resulting in new believers. Origen shows the connection clearly as well:

We have to say, moreover, that the Gospel has a demonstration of its own, more divine than any established by Grecian dialectics. And this diviner method is called by the apostle the “manifestation of the Spirit and power:” of “the Spirit” on account of the prophecies, which are sufficient to produce faith in anyone who reads them, ... and of “power,” because of the signs and wonders which we must believe to have been performed, both on many other grounds, and on this, that traces of them are still preserved among those who regulate their lives by the precepts of the Gospel.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Doles, *Miracles and Manifestations*, 23.

<sup>78</sup> John Wimber and Kevin S. Springer, *Power Evangelism* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row Publishers, 1986), 158.

<sup>79</sup> Doles, *Miracles and Manifestations*, 27-28.



How Christianity of the first few centuries overcame such odds is a wonder. It was illegal, a totally new religion being taken to foreign lands without any real social, political, or financial support systems. Yet it prevailed and grew. Clark says the clear reason is the result of power evangelism.<sup>80</sup> In effect the gods of the day were overtaken by the power of the Christian God.

Though the church was growing, a significant theological challenge occurred during this period. This was the threat of Gnosticism. This sect taught the diabolic opposite concerning body, soul, and spirit: the body was evil and therefore immaterial without value. Kelsey notes the extent to which the Christian view stood in violent contrast to this: “Celsus, who warned second-century pagans about the dangers of the new religion, sneered at Christians because sick and derelict people were acceptable to their God, who would not cast them off, and who indeed had sent his Son to serve them.”<sup>81</sup>

Thus one of the first apologetic assignments had been outlined: a defense of God’s power and desire to heal body, soul, and spirit. The early church fathers took to the task. Through their tireless efforts, they succeeded in establishing God’s holistic salvation as true doctrine. Porterfield credits the apologists with preventing a dualistic worldview from overlaying Christianity. The apologists successfully resisted the “tendencies to

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<sup>80</sup> Randy Clark, “Power Evangelism to Reach the Lost,” in *Power, Holiness, and Evangelism*, compiled by Randy Clark (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 1999), 58.

<sup>81</sup> Kelsey, *Healing*, 117.

subsume the cosmic dualism of good and evil in a philosophical dualism of spirit and matter.”<sup>82</sup>

A monumental shift occurred as they made a strong case that it is not the body which is evil. Rather, evil is an outside force, working against God. God’s answer to that evil is Jesus, who defeated the evil power which had unleashed all sorts of bondage affecting body, soul, and spirit. Now through Jesus’ incarnation, death, and resurrection, mankind could overcome the evil. Not only was belief in Jesus relevant but receiving his overcoming power was the ultimate goal. Kelsey states that through the wealth of apologetic writing of the Ante-Nicene leaders, “the value of the body and the saving action of Christ for both body and soul remained a cardinal doctrine of the early church.”<sup>83</sup>

#### AD 325 – 600: From Persecution to Position

In a monumental historic event, Christianity moved from a condemned faith on the fringe to being honored by the Roman Emperor by the Edict of Milan in 313, which declared Christianity equal with other beliefs. This was initiated by the conversion of the Roman Emperor, Constantine (272 – 337) in A.D. 312. Though the edict guaranteed freedom for all religions, Constantine himself chose to align with Christianity. This placed the church on a fast track to being absorbed into the Roman kingdom and culture.

Growth, exposure, and hands-on interest by the Emperor himself created a greater need for leadership, hierarchy, and organization. Affluence, favor, and opportunity drew

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<sup>82</sup> Amanda Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 55.

<sup>83</sup> Kelsey, *Healing*, 117.

leaders of mixed motivations. They may have displayed a lack of apostolic anointing, theological grounding, spiritual gifting or all three. This rift eventually led to the squelching of the gifts in the body. The freedom of the Spirit and gifts were trumped by position and order. It is ironic that the early church under persecution thrived in bringing the kingdom of God to the world, yet with religious freedom and affluence the supernatural ministry began to diminish in the church at large.

Though the ministry of healing and wholeness waned from the organized church, the heart of God found a voice through the monastic movement. In the midst of the secularization of the church, instead of changing from within, a vision emerged of escaping to the desert to draw close to God. Those who joined this monastic lifestyle are credited with continuing the ministry of healing. Their lives testify to many miracles, healings, and deliverances as well as great devotion to God. This devotion is expressed in their view that, “healing was simply one expression of Christian devotion to the risen Jesus, to be used as the opportunity arose.”<sup>84</sup>

Some of these great men were Antony (251-356) in Egypt, considered the father of monasticism, Pachomius (292-346), Hilarion (305-385), Benedict (480-547), and Martin of Tours (317-397) in France.<sup>85</sup> Athanasius (296/8-373) writes in *Life of Antony*, “Such are the words of Antony, and we ought not to doubt whether marvels were wrought by the hand of man. For it is the promise of the Savior...And He Himself saith to His disciples and to all who believe on Him, ‘Heal the sick, cast out demons; freely

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<sup>84</sup> Kelsey, *Healing*, 131.

<sup>85</sup> Doles, *Miracles and Manifestations*, 71-72.

you have received, freely give.”<sup>86</sup> This attitude expresses the heart of these desert fathers. They sincerely wanted to follow Christ. Seeing Christ’s compassion to heal and deliver, they in turn, believed God’s heart was still to free people from the bondage of body, soul, and spirit.

Another account of Hilarion states that when he had once retreated privately for rest in Cyprus, those with evil spirits “began to cry out that Hilarion, Christ’s servant has come, and that they must go to him . . . about two hundred people, both men and women, came...he lashed them with such prayer that some immediately, others after two or three days, all within a week, were cured.”<sup>87</sup> Miracles, deliverances, and concern for the well-being of people was a trademark of the desert fathers. Their convictions and lifestyle were the beginnings of renewal.

On another front, the power of God was still evident in various missionary efforts such as St Patrick (389-461) to Ireland and Columba (521-597) to Scotland. Miracles, signs and wonders followed them having a great impact on their mission. It is recorded of Columba, “By virtue of his prayer, he healed several persons suffering under various diseases, and he...expelled from this our island . . . innumerable hosts of malignant spirits; he performed a still greater miracle, by raising to life the dead child of an humble believer.”<sup>88</sup>

The thread of bringing wholeness to people was also a commitment of other church fathers, yet it was during this period that a distinction arose between the East and

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 112.

West. In the East, Chrysostom (346-307), Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, and his brother, Gregory of Nyssa, were instrumental in producing a theology of healing which has survived through the centuries.<sup>89</sup>

In the West however, the main theologians and apologists were not as tenacious in writing about healing, thus leaving a bit of a theological void for the coming generations. One of the most common examples is Augustine's (of Hippo, 354-430) *Confessions* in which he instructs believers not to seek for healing. He later retracts this position (40 years later), in *The City of God*, and in fact, states that he was wrong in his previous writings:

But what I said should not be taken as understanding that no miracles are believed to happen today in the name of Christ. For at the very time I wrote this book... it is not possible for us either to know of all of them or to count up all of those that we do have knowledge of.<sup>90</sup>

Kelsey provides a window into Augustine's encounters which contributed to his change of heart and theology:

In 415 one of several shrines containing the relics of St. Steven was placed in Augustine's church in Hippo. In 424, a brother and a sister, who suffered from convulsive seizures, came daily to pray at the shrine for healing. On Easter morning before the service, as the young man was standing near the relics, he fell down and looked dead but then jumped up and was cured. After talking at length with the young man that night, Augustine immediately began teaching on healing and testifying to the young man's healing.

A few days later, as Augustine was testifying to the young man's healing, the sister of the healed man ran to the shrine and experienced the same thing as her brother and she too was healed. Augustine's response captures the power of God's healing touch: "Praise to God was shouted so loud that my ears could scarcely stand the din. But, of

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<sup>89</sup> Kelsey, *Healing*, 140.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

course, the main point was that, in the hearts of all this clamoring crowd, there burned that faith in Christ for which the martyr Stephen shed his blood.”<sup>91</sup>

This change in Augustine is a great example of how experience affects theology. His personal encounter before his eyes was enough for him to reconsider and even restate his position. This is a lesson for all who are tentative or totally against the power of God working to restore people to wholeness. If a person gains experience with someone tormented in their body or soul who is undeniably delivered before their eyes, they must reconsider their position. Augustine provides a great example of this in history.

Unfortunately, Augustine’s change of perspective was not passed down. Many of the other church fathers did not have a lot of personal experience with miracles and healing. This led to a shift which was seen in their writings. In the course of time, the writings about the miracles of the monastics as well as the miracles in the Bible began to be interpreted as symbolic. Biblical miracles were spiritualized, diminishing the focus on healing and deliverance.

#### AD 600 – 1517: Institutionalism and Reform

The slow shift away from concern for the body, soul, and spirit escalated to the point that a focus on healing began to be seen as a vice. It was necessary to warn the church about the dangers of focusing on healing and deliverance. John Cassion (360-433) was convinced after studying the life of the monastics, that Christians could actually

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 146.

compromise their purity by seeking healing. He even implied that people might lose their soul if too much attention was placed on healing.<sup>92</sup>

The progression which began in the writings of Cassian was solidified by Gregory the Great (540-604), bishop of Rome from 590-604. Ruthven notes that Gregory's allusion to miracles as temporal sowed the seeds of cessationism, reducing miracles to, "scaffolding for the church, which once established...no longer required such support."<sup>93</sup> This was propagated in Gregory's work, *Book of Pastoral Care*. Over the next hundred years it was distributed to bishops as a standard training tool along with the New Testament.<sup>94</sup> With little push back, Gregory managed to turn things upside down. Sickness was no longer understood as a manifestation of evil; rather the opposite, a divinely inspired corrective from God for moral and spiritual renewal.<sup>95</sup>

The question wasn't about God's power but rather His intention to heal. The impact, described by Kelsey, was immeasurable and was felt for over one thousand years: "The coming centuries would be impacted greatly by a bit of theological void concerning sickness, wholeness, healing, and deliverance. With almost no clear emphasis on the importance of healing from a theological point of view, the Western church moved into the turmoil and confusion of the seventh and eighth centuries dominated by the pervasive influence of Gregory, who saw illness largely as a scourge of God."<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>Kelsey, *Healing*, 152.

<sup>93</sup> Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic on Post-Biblical Miracles* (Tulsa: Word & Spirit Press, 2011), 19.

<sup>94</sup>Kelsey, *Healing*, 153.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*, 155-156.

Yet all was not lost. Evidence of healing and wholeness was seen through the continued expansion of the church into new mission fields. Even Pope Gregory himself recognized the miracles of Augustine of Canterbury (early sixth century-604) on his missionary work in Great Britain. The miracles were so commonplace that the Pope warned Augustine to “examine your inner dispositions...lest the frail mind becomes proud because of these wonderful events.”<sup>97</sup> The relationship of miracles leading to faith is documented as well by Gregory, who observed that “the English are being drawn to inward grace by outward miracles.”<sup>98</sup>

The monastic movement was a further force which contributed both to the decline and the resurgence of a biblical view of wholeness. The original movement unfortunately grew to have several weaknesses: extreme emphasis on devotion, pride, and rules which fostered righteousness through works, and more importantly, self-sacrifice and suffering which began to be seen as a virtue. This contributed to the view that sickness was a blessing from God with a spiritual benefit of cleansing the soul.<sup>99</sup>

As a result of an arguable demise of the monastics over time, even centuries, a monastic renewal was birthed. The new generation went back to the Bible to get their instructions. With a simple reading of Scripture, they determined to do and teach as Jesus instructed the disciples. Thus miracles, deliverance, and healing through compassion were expected and found. Hyatt even credits this group with representing a “charismatic

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<sup>97</sup> Bede, *A History of the English Church and People*, trans. Leo Shirley-Price (London: Penguin Books, 1968), 88.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>99</sup> Eddie L. Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity*, (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2002), 52-53.



renewal at a crucial point in the history of the church.”<sup>100</sup> These renewalists, or preaching friars, as they were known, include: Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), Dominic (1170-1221), Francis of Assisi (1181-1226), Vincent of Ferrier (1350-1419) and Frances Xavier (1509-1552). These leaders were noted as having great success with many miracles as they went out to the people to preach the gospel.<sup>101</sup>

In addition to the monastics and missionary efforts, there were also other witnesses who fought for a more authentic view of God’s heart and His Word. The church will always have reformers who speak up against error and injustice. One such group which arose was called the Waldenses, who represented a pre-reformation movement. In terms of the Holy Spirit and healing, they marked a return to biblical truth. Depending on the Holy Spirit, they recognized that every believer can be a minister. Furthermore they reinstituted prayer for the sick, claiming that healing prayer modeled after the apostles could expect the same miraculous results. Despite the excommunication of their leader, Philip Walden in 1184, the group survived and was folded into the Protestant Reformation, yet maintained distinct. Traces of the Waldenses are still present today, specifically in Italy.<sup>102</sup>

### Changing Worldviews

Along with these developments, another monumental philosophical shift was occurring as the world began navigating through several unexpected challenges. The

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>101</sup> Doles, *Miracles and Manifestations*, 101-102.

<sup>102</sup> Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity*, 68-69.

setbacks were so massive that the period is known as the Dark Ages. At the core of the darkness was the historic event known as “the Fall of Rome.” Not only was the kingdom conquered but the invaders were seen as backwards or “barbarians.” The situation became quite different than the stable, sophisticated, educated, and civilized Roman culture. Cities turned to rubble, education was stifled, and infrastructure was destroyed.

This was exacerbated by the rise of a competing religion, Islam, along with the military advances of their movement. Corresponding Crusades ordered by the Catholic church exposed the fractures within Christianity. Furthermore the historic black plague swept through Europe killing millions wiping out entire cities. Some suggest that even one-third of the world’s population died as a result of the plague.<sup>103</sup>

Not only were these devastating times but if placed in the historical context of the thriving Roman culture coupled with rising Christianity, the pain is even greater. These were not bad times getting worse. These were good times going drastically wrong. What happens to worldviews when the world does not turn out as expected? People were in need of answers.

Some historians argue that the tension was eased by a shift from a Platonic (open to supra-natural interaction) worldview to an Aristotelean (more closed system) worldview. Aristotle’s (384 B.C.- 322 B.C.) views and the impact on healing and miracles are summed up by Kelsey: “With Aristotle, divine healing became impossible because of a metaphysics which rejected any elementary principle of evil in the world,

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<sup>103</sup> Kelsey, *Healing*, 166.

and at the same time eliminated any other realm of reality which could intervene to offer healing.”<sup>104</sup>

Scholars further purport that Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) became the new and unique voice of the Aristotelean reality. The disillusionment of the times coupled with Aquinas’ work, especially *Summa Theologica* (written 1265–1274), led to the full-scale embrace of the closed system worldview. The movement became known as *Scholasticism* and became pervasive throughout all aspects of Western culture.<sup>105</sup>

This sad commentary reveals how far the church was drifting away from the core message and means. Though miracles had not ceased, as seen in missions, monastics and other reformers, these were considered special cases at best and thoroughly suspect at worst. The following centuries would react to the excesses and errors of the times. They would also continue to build upon the closed worldview. As a result, suffering humanity would become trapped even more in a closed world, robbed of God’s power to deliver.

### 1517 – 1700: The Protestant Reformation

Martin Luther and John Calvin must be credited for their courage and tenacity to demand a change in the many challenges which were facing the Catholic Church. The day of reckoning was October 31, 1517 when Luther nailed his protest to the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg, Germany: *Ninety-Five Theses on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*. For fifteen hundred years as the church grew, the unity and spread of Christianity was depicted by the name Catholic, meaning “universal.” Though the East

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 159.

had previously split and maintained the Eastern Orthodox branch of Christianity (1054), that secession paled in comparison to this rift. The universal/Catholic church rejected Luther's complaint but failed in suppressing the movement. The idea of a universal church became obsolete. This opened the door for many questions. The situation was volatile. Much attention would be needed to ensure the transition did not lead to extremes and error. The need to control the path forward put great pressure on Luther and Calvin to reject the notion that miracles validated doctrine, a view strongly held in the Catholic Church. For Luther, nothing could further validate his revelation that "the just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17).

Moreover the next logical step was to see this newly found "salvation" through faith alone as far more urgent and life-giving than power encounters. The spirit man must find God through faith alone, not works, penance, or miracles. The need for healing the body and soul of the tormenting powers of darkness which Jesus had defeated was alleviated. Kelsey states that, "Faith in the saving power of Jesus Christ was more noble than asking for experience or evidence."<sup>106</sup>

On the other hand, when pressed, God and man could encounter each other through healing. Luther himself prayed for his friends Philip Melancthon (described as being at death's door) and Frederick Myconius (suffering from tuberculosis). Both were healed and were restored to their work.<sup>107</sup> In striking clarity, Luther clearly states his theological position along with his warning concerning signs and wonders. This excerpt is taken from a sermon by Luther in 1522:

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<sup>106</sup> Kelsey, *Healing*, 174.

<sup>107</sup> Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity*, 75.

Some rush on to explain these signs as spiritual, so as to preserve the honor of the saints, but it will not do to strain the words. They do not carry such meaning.... Others...say that though not every individual has the power and does wonders mentioned, yet the church as a whole, the multitude of Christendom, has; one may drive out devils, another heal the sick, and so on. Therefore they say, such signs are a manifestation of the Spirit... But these words do not refer to the Church as a whole, but to each person separately. The meaning is: If there is a Christian who has faith, he shall have power to do these accompanying miracles, and they shall follow him, as Christ says, in John 14:12... for a Christian has equal power with Christ...The Lord has given Christians power as written in Matt. 10:8.

Then the warning follows:

So, where there is a Christian, there is still the power to do these signs if it is necessary. But no one should attempt to exercise this power if it is not necessary or if need does not compel. The apostles did not always exercise it, but only made use of it to prove the Word of God – to confirm it by the miracles; as it is written... “The Lord working with them, and confirming the Word by the signs that followed.”

There are many accounts of the Reformation leaders affirming and even performing miracles but the message they successfully communicated, almost against their own knowledge, was one which discouraged the expectation of miracles. This is a great lesson from history on the impact of interpretation, leadership, theology, and writing. The reformers had a faulty application of scripture as prescriptive rather than descriptive. The signs which follow describe the life of a believer. This stands opposed to the idea that signs are prescribed, meaning they are only to confirm the message and thus only needed circumstantially. To preach the message that there is power and then not to offer the power is altogether ironic.

This shift, though contrary to the biblical record as well as church history, quickly spread through writing. Eventually the masses were informed that miracles had ceased. No more revelation—falsely and inversely—meant no more miracles. The critical task was to have correct doctrine and to embrace salvation through faith. This maneuver of the

Reformation period dealt a double blow to God's mission of restoring people to wholeness.

First, the power to deliver, the ongoing power of the Holy Spirit, was cut off. Second, the focus on the way to salvation (through faith and not works or penance) eclipsed the concern for living in abundance in this life. Ruthven recognizes that the issue is even more foundational stating that, "Protestantism succeeded in suppressing the central characteristic of the New Covenant from Scripture itself, namely, the ongoing and biblically normative process of the revelation of God directly and immediately in the hearts of believers."<sup>108</sup>

For many this error went unnoticed but for others it was not acceptable. Thankfully there were those within the protestant camp who wanted reform without throwing out the Holy Spirit and His gifts. One example is seen in the Quaker movement, started by George Fox (1624-1691). The Quakers demonstrated explosive evangelistic growth resulting from the power of the Holy Spirit. This movement paralleled many aspects of the early church—the priesthood of all believers, seeing the church as people and not buildings, and more importantly personal encounters with God. Miracles were common place which resulted in exponential growth. Fox testifies that the power of the Holy Spirit was prevalent:

Many great and wonderful things were wrought by the heavenly power in those days...by his great power, to the astonishment of many, by the healing virtue whereby many have been delivered from great infirmities. And the devils were made subject through His name; of which particular instances might be given, beyond what this unbelieving age is able to receive or bear.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Ruthven, *Cessation of the Charismata*, xx.

<sup>109</sup> Doles, *Miracles and Manifestations*, 188.

They advanced through opposition on every side, imprisonment, and persecution. Yet the message rang true. Amidst the pharisaic voices, the common people recognized the truth. By the late 1600s, reports claim that Fox had raised up to fifty-six traveling preachers as well as close to sixty thousand followers and that the Quakers had become the fastest growing movement in the Western world.<sup>110</sup>

Though the power of God had a voice, it was effectively silenced by the official Reformation leaders. Surely Luther and Calvin unlocked a great treasure through the “justification by faith” message. However, for the purposes of God’s message of wholeness through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Reformation period not only came up short but it adversely affected the church’s role to proclaim and demonstrate a full gospel to bring freedom and wholeness to people. As the face and voice of the forthcoming Protestant branch of Christianity, Luther and Calvin sided with the closed world perspective as well as the idea that suffering was redemptive. Miracles were no longer needed. The power of God was possible but not likely or normative.

#### 1700 – 1900: Revivals of the Holy Spirit

Two branches of the Reformation message continued to spread during the coming centuries. One branch promoted the full gospel with signs and wonders and continued to bring wholeness to people through Jesus and His victory over Satan. The other branch compromised the full gospel in order to create a safe and stable theology in support of the closed worldview.

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<sup>110</sup> Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity*, 93.

During times of instability, people will look for order and will feel safer with the popular vote. This was the strength of the Reformation movement. The price was a decrease in the supernatural: instead of seeking wholeness, people bought the twist that it is better to thank God for the chance to be purified through your affliction. A new gospel was unfortunately spreading around the world: the gospel of cessationism (no more direct revelation from God, no more gifts of the Spirit).<sup>111</sup> Yet the full gospel is never without a witness. The other branch of the Reformation message was also alive, growing, and spreading internationally.

The Moravian movement is of the most memorable examples. Moravians are remembered for their devotion to prayer and missions but miracles were also common. Zinzendorf (1700-1760) records all manner of healing of things such as cancer and other incurable diseases.<sup>112</sup> Through the Moravian movement, though modest in size, many missionaries were sent all over the world. Their missions efforts of twenty years were claimed to have surpassed the missions efforts of the previous two hundred years.<sup>113</sup> Again the relationship between the evangelistic heart of God, the Holy Spirit, and healing is seen.

Other examples of miracles, healing, and wholeness are seen in the great revivals in America and Great Britain. Many strong leaders passionately preached God's power to heal and restore. Some of these leaders witnessing the miraculous power of God include John Wesley (1703-1791), George Whitfield (1714-1770), Edward Irving (1772-1834), Peter Cartwright (1785-1872), Charles Finney (1792-1875), Johann Blumhardt (1805-

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<sup>111</sup> Ruthven, *Cessation*, xx, 5.

<sup>112</sup> Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity*, 96.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.



1880), Phoebe Palmer (1807-1874), Dr. Charles Cullis (1833-1892), Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) and A.J. Gordan (1836-1895). The move of God through these evangelists and the corresponding revivals was so visible that the times were dubbed, “The Great Awakening” (1726-1750: the Great Awakening and 1800-1840: The Second Great Awakening).

Even names of the revivals reveal the perception of a return to foundational truths. All across America and Europe people were being awakened to the power of the Holy Spirit to heal as well as to enable believers to overcome Satan. Innumerable supernatural acts occurred through these men and the corresponding revivals of this era. During this time healing and evangelism were becoming inextricably linked. The fruit was clear to see—many put their faith in Jesus Christ. Finney is even reported to have led half a million people to Christ. All through his ministry there was evidence of the Holy Spirit, healing, and the supernatural.<sup>114</sup> This was a refreshing return to the biblical model of proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

The Great Awakenings and Cane Ridge (Kentucky, 1801) revivals impacted astounding numbers by the power of the Holy Spirit. The ministry of deliverance and healing was extended freely. People shook, fell, wept, moaned, were delivered of mental problems and healed of physical ailments.<sup>115</sup> In Kentucky alone, the Baptist churches record adding ten thousand new members and the Methodist, forty thousand, between 1800-1803.<sup>116</sup> Many testimonies record healings not just through the evangelists but

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<sup>114</sup> Randy Clark, *There is More! Reclaiming the Power of Impartation* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Global Awakening, 2006), 85-6.

<sup>115</sup> Clark, *There Is More*, 85.

<sup>116</sup> Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity*, 117.

through lay people who simply turned to prayer on behalf of others. In Wesley's journals he records these accounts:

I walked over to Mr. E's, a gentleman who had no thought of God, till his favorite child lay at the point of death. It then came into his mind, to pray for his life. He did so, and the child recovered. This struck him to the heart, and he rested no more, till his own soul was healed (*March 23, 1758*).<sup>117</sup>

The physician told me he could do no more; Mr. Meyrick could not live over the night. I went up, and found them all crying about him; his legs being cold, and (as it seemed) dead already. We all kneeled down, and called upon God with strong cries and tears. He opened his eyes, and called for me; and, from that hour, he continued to recover his strength, till he was restored to perfect health. I wait to hear who will either disprove this fact, or philosophically account for it (*December 25, 1742*).<sup>118</sup>

Peter Cartwright testifies that there was, "Divine unction to the word preached, and thousands fell under the mighty hand of God, and thus the Methodist Episcopal Church was planted firmly in this Western wilderness, and many glorious signs have followed, and will follow, to the end of time."<sup>119</sup>

This period was an enormous breakthrough for the church in restoring the truth which had been suppressed. God wanted to heal people. This message was boldly offered along with the power to deliver. There was an unapologetic embrace of the proclamation and demonstration of the full gospel. The Holy Spirit was no respecter of denominations as seen in reports of miracles and manifestations in the Moravians, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, Huguenots, Methodists, Congregationalists, and others.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Doles, *Miracles and Manifestations*, 212.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>119</sup> Clark, *There is More*, 83.

<sup>120</sup> Doles, *Miracles and Manifestations*, 171.

The response of the people bears witness to the hunger and thirst of the human condition. People do need a savior who can touch body, soul, and spirit. When a man or woman can offer that with power and love, people will respond. This was the case in the nineteenth century. Not only was healing a part of ministry but specific homes and centers were established for ministering to people in body, soul and spirit. Some examples are a healing center in Bad Boll, Germany led by Johann Blumhardt (1805-80)<sup>121</sup> and Bethshan healing house in England which became the focus point of healing ministry in England, led by Elizabeth Baxter (1837-1926) and Charlotte C. Murray.<sup>122</sup>

As the healing movement became known throughout the world, an international community of faith was forming extending from America and Great Britain to India, Australia, and Europe.<sup>123</sup> Writing was a significant tool to foster, train, and encourage the community. It was also a key in the propagation of the healing message as well as its defense. Classic works provided the biblical foundation as well as answers to the critics, who were many. These writings included *The Great Physician* (1881) by William Boardman (1810-1896), *Sickness and the Gospel* (1878) by Otto Stockmayer (1838-1912), the writings of Dorothea Trudel (1813-1862) as well as journals and periodicals such as *Word, Work and World* by A.B. Simpson (1843-1919) and *Triumphs of Faith: A Monthly Journal Devoted to Faith-Healing, and to the Promotion of Christian Holiness*

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<sup>121</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Miracles, The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*, vol 1. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 388.

<sup>122</sup> Heather Curtis, "The Global Character of Nineteen-Century Divine Healing," in *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, ed. Candy Gunther Brown (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 33.

<sup>123</sup> Curtis, "Global Character," 33.

by Carrie Judd Montgomery (1858-1946). Letter-writing was also a strategic tool which spread divine healing across trans-continental lines.<sup>124</sup>

### 1900 – Present: The Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement

It is fair to say that in the last hundred years before the twenty-first century, the church made great strides in recapturing God's heart for wholeness, the power to provide it, the biblical mandate to support it, strong leaders who ministered it, and countless testimonies to prove it. However, initial enthusiasm was tempered by many deterrents: concerns over the rejection of medicine,<sup>125</sup> disappointment when healing failed to occur, disagreement on healing in the atonement,<sup>126</sup> questionable and unverifiable accounts,<sup>127</sup> and concern for too much attention on the faith healer.<sup>128</sup> Healing, deliverance, and wholeness was gaining international ground but some issues needed to be resolved. It was in the midst of this tension that God decided to visit the church with a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Many in the previous decades had referred to a mighty move of God which was coming. They were praying for a great worldwide revival. Boardman announced this expectation at the International Conference on Divine Healing and True Holiness

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 31-33, 37.

<sup>125</sup> Keener, *Miracles*, I:398. Missionaries claiming their healing and/or rejecting medicine were dying on the mission field. One example is Charlie Miller who was a missionary to Africa at just twenty-one years of age. He was working with the Methodist Bishop William Taylor. After refusing medicine and claiming healing, he eventually died May 7, 1885. The resistance to medicine took a toll on many African missionaries who died of malaria because they refused the medicine.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., I:399.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., I:400.

<sup>128</sup> Curtis, "Global Character," 39.

(London, 1885): “We are assembled here, I trust, in the opening of a new revival of Pentecost...the preparation for God’s reproducing the Pentecostal fullness in the earth.”<sup>129</sup> Boardman’s hope was fulfilled in the coming decades.

On April 14, 1906, in a rundown building in a shady part of Los Angeles, California, under the leadership of a one-eye black preacher, what became known as the Azusa Street Revival started and lasted for about nine years. Miracles and powerful worship were characteristic but a distinguishing feature of the revival was speaking in tongues. Despite the scrutiny and rejection of many, white people freely joined the meetings causing even more attention. Eventually the revival attracted people from all over the world. This was the first distinct move of the Holy Spirit which would continue throughout the century.

This power of the Holy Spirit over the coming years came in waves beginning in 1906,<sup>130</sup> then in the 1960s, and again in the 1980s. These are respectively referred to as the Pentecostal movement, the Charismatic movement,<sup>131</sup> and the Third Wave movement.<sup>132</sup> In this paper these will be referred to as the Pentecostal/Charismatic

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<sup>129</sup> Candy Gunther Brown, “Introduction: Pentecostalism and the Globalization of Illness and Health,” in *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, ed. Candy Gunther Brown, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 30.

<sup>130</sup> Many discussions group the move of the Spirit in 1901 in Topeka, Kansas through the ministry of Charles Parham to the 1906 historical outpouring at Azusa St. in Los Angeles, CA through the ministry the ministry of William Seymour. Seymour had been impacted by Parham’s teachings in Kansas.

<sup>131</sup> The unfolding of Charismatic movement is traditionally tied to Dennis Bennett’s announcement in 1960, to his church that he had been filled with the Spirit and spoke in tongues. Bennett was the rector the St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California.

<sup>132</sup> The Third Wave (also referred to as Neo-Charismatic) was coined by C. Peter Wagner. Many within and outside mainline denominations believed in and experienced the gifts of the Holy Spirit and simply did not want the label of Charismatic or Pentecostal. Third Wave refers to this group.

movement.<sup>133</sup> Because speaking in tongues was such a strange phenomenon, that topic gained more attention than other factors. In retrospect, tongues is seen as a factor but not the key factor of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement. In fact, the unifying factor was healing more than the other characteristics. Brown cites a 2006 survey from ten countries across North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa reporting that healing is the key distinguishing feature of the movement, more so than speaking in tongues or the prosperity message.<sup>134</sup> In most cases seventy percent of Pentecostals link their faith to a direct experience with healing, either a personal healing or healing in a close relationship.<sup>135</sup> As such, healing is a unifying factor in the history of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement.

As with the other periods of history, the twentieth century was blessed with strong ministry leaders who championed the Pentecostal/Charismatic message. Healing, deliverance, and miracles were prolific in their ministries. Some of these leaders include: Smith Wigglesworth (1859-1947), John G. Lake (1870-1935), Oral Roberts (1918-2009), T. L. Osborne (1923-), Kathryn Kuhlman (1907-1976), John Wimber (1934-1997), Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944), and Francis McNutt (1925-). Through charismatic leadership, media, and globalization the movement grew at a remarkable pace.

Clark states the dramatic results: “In less than one hundred years, Pentecostals and Charismatics would become the largest group of Protestant Christians in the world,

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<sup>133</sup> With a little distance now from these experiences, the more prevalent view is that these are all one move of God with slight variations and expressions.

<sup>134</sup> Brown, “Introduction: Pentecostalism and the Globalization of Illness and Health,” 3.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

numbering more than all other Protestants combined. Where other Protestant works had been going for 500 years, the Pentecostal movement would sweep past them in numbers of adherents, conversions, and workers in one hundred years.”<sup>136</sup>

How did this happen? Clark highlights God’s blessing on the return to New Testament evangelism in word and deed: “The Pentecostals embraced ... the power ministries of the Holy Spirit...*Sōzō*, the Greek verb meaning ‘to save’ and its noun derivative, *sōtēr*, meaning ‘salvation’ are used in the Bible to refer to not only the saving of the soul, but deliverance from demonized situations, and physical and emotional healing. It was this understanding of the fullness of our salvation, embraced by the Pentecostals, which gave such spiritual power to their message.”<sup>137</sup>

Because of this dramatic evidence worldwide, the miracles, signs and wonders could not be ignored. Whereas in previous periods of church history, the thread of the healing and deliverance has been obscured, denied, and even omitted from the record,<sup>138</sup> with the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement, the evidence and the global impact was too massive to be ignored. This does not mean that this resurgence of miracles and healing advanced without a fight; quite the contrary. However the resistance could not and did not suppress the evidence.

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<sup>136</sup> Clark, *There is More*, 239.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>138</sup> See Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity*, 1-5.

## Cessation Versus Continued Revelation

The last hundred years is nothing short of epic for the church in her role as God's regents here on earth. However, the same period which can boast of the indescribable move of the Holy Spirit all over the earth with signs and wonders was simultaneously decried by culture, biblical scholars, and faithful believers alike. The New Testament Holy Spirit just did not fit easily into the modern world and mind. New scholasticism in biblical studies led to outright rejection of the supernatural. Other shifts built upon the existential thinking of Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) and Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) which argued that miracles distract from the ultimate goal: the focus should remain on the character and morality of Jesus.<sup>139</sup> Porterfield explains the natural progression of this thinking established by Rudolph Bultmann (1884-1976) who called for "an existential understanding of the gospel message and symbolic interpretations of the healing miracles of Jesus."<sup>140</sup>

What began as a distancing from miracles in the Reformation became a full blown rejection in a few hundred years. The verdict was in: miracles are out. In other words, they ceased, thus the view—cessationism—which held that the gifts of the Spirit ended after the age of the apostles. Accordingly, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, miracles, and healing are not available for today.<sup>141</sup>

These were the cumulative effects of the age of reason, existentialism, a developing world, and the impact of professional theologians divorced from praxis.

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<sup>139</sup> Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity*, 25.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>141</sup> Ruthven, *Cessation*, xx-5.



Kelsey contrasts this twentieth century theological stance with God's clearly revealed mission to interact with his creation and restore people to wholeness: "To them, the idea of a transpersonal reality influencing the human psyche or body for sickness or health is not worth discussing seriously.... They reject a healing ministry on philosophical grounds."<sup>142</sup>

This was an age in which, sadly for many, "logic" trumped truth. The miracles of the Bible became the stuff of myth. B. B. Warfield (1851-1921), professor of Theology at Princeton from 1887-1921, was a key contributor in this process, as documented in Warfield's *Counterfeit Miracles* (1918). Ruthven explains the significance of Warfield's work: Warfield who "represents the culmination of the cessationist tradition... was the most prominent modern evangelical advocate for this position... and was steeped in the modern philosophical presuppositions which undergird the recent expressions of cessationism."<sup>143</sup>

Ruthven's work, *On the Cessation of the Charismata*, unravels the inconsistencies of Warfield's argument. Through careful examination of the details of Warfield's polemic, Ruthven summarizes a critical error: "Warfield confuses 'completion' with 'sufficiency' with respect to the revelation of Christ...it is clear that Warfield confuses *process* (revelation) with *content* (the normative statement of the Church's faith).<sup>144</sup> Warfield's view was thorough; however, at the core, it reflected the same fear of the reformers: if miracles happen then further revelation, or doctrine, is possible.

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<sup>142</sup> Kelsey, *Healing*, 272.

<sup>143</sup> Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata*, 8.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

Despite this contemporary dismantling of Warfield's position, Warfield managed to create the bedrock of cessationist theology which the twentieth century would use to discredit the move of the Holy Spirit—the miracles, healings, tongues, power and presence—which was unnerving and bewildering many.

The cessationist view became an anchor in the theological and academic institutions. Criticism and doubt were hailed as progress juxtaposed against faith. Amidst this wisdom of the world, it is ironic that God decided to spawn a worldwide awakening to His power which brought healing and deliverance to the body, soul, and spirit back onto center stage. As theologians announced that God does not interact personally with man, God decided to show up and mess with the material world dumbfounding and offending the educated and enlightened. Truth rang out for the masses who corporately reflected the human condition—man in need of salvation—in body, soul, and spirit.

### Moving Closer Toward Wholeness

At the end of the day, healing has been the main contributing force behind the growth of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement.<sup>145</sup> It speaks to the felt need which God desperately wants to meet. Thankfully the church is on the upswing in recovering from the blows of the last one thousand years. A movement with which has a following of over a billion people across all continents in less than one-hundred years<sup>146</sup> has clearly

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<sup>145</sup> Candy Gunther Brown, *Introduction: Pentecostalism and the Globalization of Illness and Healing*, “studies make a strong case that divine healing is the single most important category—more significant than glossolalia or prosperity—for understanding the global expansion of Pentecostal Christianity,” 14.

<sup>146</sup> Brown, *Introduction*, 14.

uncovered a truth which warrants careful examination, even from the most critical opponents.

This period of renewal of the church not only demonstrated the power of God, it also made huge strides towards recovering the “why” behind God’s power. God’s intent is restoration and wholeness. The move of the Spirit in the last century planted seeds of hope for overcoming the strongholds which bind people. These seeds bore fruit seen in many new ministry models which focus on bringing wholeness to people in body, soul, and spirit. These are often referred to as “inner healing” ministries.

Some examples of inner healing models are Restoring the Foundations, Theophostic ministry, Sōzō, Cleansing Streams, and Celebrate Recovery. These ministries have plowed tough ground and faced resistance but have prevailed because of the living proof of thousands who have been set free from sickness of soul. The years of on-the-spot healing and deliverance had a powerful impact but inner healing followed behind to show people how to have a lifestyle of freedom. These ministries are becoming more and more popular.

An additional move towards wholeness has also been steadily gaining force partially as an outgrowth of inner healing. This is the revelation and acknowledgement that our physical health is inextricable linked to our mental and emotional health. A common testimony of inner healing ministry is that physical symptoms have disappeared as people have walked through forgiveness, found freedom from fear, control, shame, and other bondages. Henry Wright is well known for his *Be In Health* ministry which sees inner healing as pragmatic treatment for physical sickness.<sup>147</sup> The idea of the Bible

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<sup>147</sup> After years of discouragement over the lack of healing, as a pastor, Henry Wright began to seek God’s wisdom. His search led to the discovery that sickness in the body can be a mirror of sickness in the

expressing clues for physical health is outlined by two Christian physicians in *None of These Diseases*, by McMillen (M.D.) and Stern (M.D.).

These developments in the church are mirrored in pastoral ministry within the medical community. One example is *The Forgiveness Project*, by Michael S. Barry, which draws a direct parallel between forgiveness and cancer. In his book, Dr. Barry explains the problem and the solution:

Cancer Treatment Centers of America in Philadelphia is pioneering the integration of forgiveness education more broadly into our culture through a program called *Release!* Perhaps a new norm can be established, a new emotional baseline created, that reflects a new and better appreciation for the importance of the health and well-being of a person's soul in the endless quest for personal peace and physical healing.

Forgiveness is not the norm in our society. Against the backdrop of an increasingly secular culture, any serious attempt to forgive entails walking the road less traveled. In our violent and hate-filled culture, vengeance is the norm at one extreme, and apathy at the other—both of which lead to poor health, in body, mind, and spirit, as well as in family, community, and culture.<sup>148</sup>

This type of medical research along with pragmatic inner healing and a continued increase in healing ministries is gaining attention inside and outside church.

While “healing in Jesus’ name” is less suspect, other secular healing techniques are also in vogue. For many healing is not a question of “if” but rather “which type of healing” one will pursue: Alternative Healing, Quantum Healing, Chakra Healing, Healing prayer, Therapeutic Touch, and Reiki are a sampling of what is available to the seeker. What does this reflect? People want to be better. They realize they are broken and need to be

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soul and spirit. These sicknesses are not seen and may not even be known to the person. Thus a ministry to help people discover and find freedom was established. Wright shares his discoveries, the biblical basis, and many testimonies in his book, *A More Excellent Way, Spiritual Roots of Disease, Pathways to Wholeness* (Thomaston, GA: Pleasant Valley Publications, 2003).

<sup>148</sup> Michael S. Barry, *The Forgiveness Project, The Startling Discovery of How to Overcome Cancer, Find Health, and Achieve Peace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2011), 32.

restored. This age is no different than any other. The contemporary body, soul, and spirit mirror the emptiness created by a post-modern vacuum.

Clark identifies the shift now being felt after a failed age of reason has left a spiritual void: “post-modern thought has rejected the closed window worldview... and has embraced a world closer to the worldview of the first century than probably any other century in the last 500 years.”<sup>149</sup> The church is rising up to the task with maturation being seen in several regards. Evidence of this is seen in a move towards a balance of “Word and Spirit.” A weakness in the past century has been charismatic leaders without strong biblical grounding or biblical scholars who invalidate God’s power to heal. New scholars are embracing the Spirit while Spirit-filled ministers are also investing more in their scholarship.<sup>150</sup> Along with bridging this gap, another tremendous step forward has been the emphasis on training and not just on the healing minister.

Randy Clark, founder of Global Awakening (GA) ministry, stands out as a prime example of this model. His conviction is that inner healing, deliverance, and physical healing should be a normal ministry of all believers, the priesthood of all believers, ministering one to another. As a healing minister, he sees his role as an equipper of believers and not just a minister of healing. His ministry, Global Awakening, is designed around these core values. Evidence of this is seen in Global Awakening’s recent launch of the Christian Healing Certification Program. Online courses are available on inner healing, physical healing and deliverance.

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<sup>149</sup> Randy Clark, “*Power Evangelism to Reach the Lost*,” 61.

<sup>150</sup> Examples of “Word and Spirit” leaders include C. Peter Wagner, Jon Mark Ruthven, Charles Kraft, Wayne Grudem, Rolland Baker, Randy Clark, Craig S. Keener, Gary S. Greig, and Candy Gunther Brown. *The Kingdom and the Power*, eds. Gary S. Greig and Kevin N. Springer (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), is a collection of articles reflecting the voice of “Word and Spirit.” Scholarship submitted to the Spirit with graceful yet candid responses to views that oppose the Holy Spirit’s continuation of the healing motif today.

With the lessons learned since the early 1900s, worldwide embrace of the Holy Spirit and maturity in ministry as well as scholarship, the church is drawing closer towards the author's premise regarding the church's evangelistic paradigm: God's intention is for wholeness and His means is the power of the Holy Spirit.

### Historical Foundation Conclusion

By God's design, the church is to be a regent, an ambassador, a bride, one who must know the values of the king and the kingdom. As such, evangelism must begin with this end in mind, the kingdom culture. The end of evangelism is a whole person walking in God's love and living in the power of the Holy Spirit. Challenges to this baseline must not be allowed to distract the church from the mission—salvation, healing, wholeness. If first impressions matter then the evangelistic arm of the church has some work to do. It is the starting point.

Evangelism must go straight into the battle with the enemy and say, "Yes to Jesus. No to Satan. No to sickness. No to mental confusion. No to poverty of soul. No to spiritual blindness. And no to all competing spiritual powers." This cannot be done and was never meant to be done without the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit. The pursuit of wholeness has been present in church history, though not pervasive. Many obstacles clouded the vision. Though there were distractions for the church, throughout history a common denominator is that people have had great needs and were crying out for help.

The two periods of time to be commended in responding to this cry by revealing and ministering wholeness to hurting people are the first few centuries after Christ and the last one-hundred years. Two parallels from these two periods are evident: 1) God's

power to heal the whole person was preached and understood as an inherent part of gospel message; and 2) the knowledge and power of the Holy Spirit which brought healing and freedom from bondage resulted in the greatest evangelistic fruit in the church's history.

The church will be wise to learn from the past. The way forward must be faithful to use the power of the Holy Spirit to announce and deliver freedom to people in ways which restore them in body, soul, and spirit. This is the commission for which the church has been given authority: go in His power; signs will follow; and many will put their faith in Him.

### **Theological Foundation**

This section presents the theological framework surrounding wholeness. Theology to support this premise will include creation, God, trinity, sin, and salvation. These theological doctrines emphasize the original intent of God which is that God created man to live in wholeness. Sin and evil are hindrances to man flourishing. God's answer for these dilemmas is Jesus and the ongoing revelation of the Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit enables man to live with the authority Jesus gave him to be an overcomer in this present fallen world.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Galatians 1:3-5, "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

## Theology Context

The study of theology by definition is the study of God. An implicit aspect of this definition is that the subject is the God of the Bible. In the survey of theologies ascribed to the category of “Christian Theology” it appears that the subject does not always reflect the God of the Bible. An example would be writings of Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109). He shared the view that God could not suffer therefore God could not be moved by our condition. The idea that we feel God’s compassion only means that we perceive compassion. God is not capable of compassion.<sup>152</sup> Regarding love, Anselm and Aquinas (1225-1274), clarify that “loving impassability” allows God to love without being emotionally connected at all to the person or the situation.<sup>153</sup> This god is unlike the God of Scripture epitomized by the classic verse, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whosoever believed in Him should not perish but have life everlasting” (Jn. 3:16).<sup>154</sup> These examples are cited to make the case that the author’s work in Christian theology will strive to represent the God of the Bible. Unfortunately this is not a baseline for the field of theology.

Bloesch addresses this problem directly stating that “it is fashionable in modern theology to treat the language of the Bible as “archaic” leaving theology in a search for “a new conceptuality that is more inclusive and less naïve than the Bible

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<sup>152</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology, An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 215.

<sup>153</sup> McGrath, 215-216.

<sup>154</sup> See also the depth of Jesus’ emotion and compassion, Jesus weeps for Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44); Jesus weeps at Lazarus’ death (John 11:33-36).



imagery.”<sup>155</sup> Bultmann (1884-1976) argues that people cannot believe in miracles any longer, so the “mythical garb of the text therefore presents a serious obstacle to faith in the crucified and risen Lord.” The voices of Bultmann’s influence consider theology’s task to demythologize the language of the Bible in order to “uncover its universal meaning for human existence.”<sup>156</sup> An example of this is seen in the feminist need to fashion God into the “Womb of being” or the “Womb and Birth of Time” or “Immanent Mother.”<sup>157</sup> This is the divergent journey of modern theology.

Berkhof, speaking of modern theologies—“liberal,” “progressive,” “modern,” and “radical”—identifies a common goal: “their attempt to bring about a reconciliation between the gospel and the spirit of modernity; negatively, their deviation...from the classic or traditional teachings of the church.”<sup>158</sup> Paul Tillich (1886-1965) is not only a theologian on the topic but his life experience put him in the crux of the matter—the tension between culture and religion. Living through WWI and the Nazi depravity, his conclusion was to reject heteronomy (religion dominating culture), cultural autonomy (culture independent of religion) in favor of “theonomous culture,” in which neither culture nor religion dominates the other, but both work toward a mutually beneficial interaction.<sup>159</sup> The next step for Tillich, as a representative of other modern theologies, was the need to make God and the Bible more relevant if Christianity was to be beneficial

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<sup>155</sup> Donald G. Bloesch, *Theology of Word and Spirit* (Downers Grove: IL: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 85.

<sup>156</sup> Bloesch, 85.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> Hendrikus Berkhof, *Two Hundred Years of Theology*, trans. by John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 131.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 119-121.

to culture. Unfortunately this led theology away from the God of the Bible. Tillich argues that in fact the Bible is actually “burdened” by its language obliging theologians to “deliteralize or desupernaturalize the biblical witness.” For Tillich, this produces a symbolic Jesus, not the Son of God, but rather a new spirit or “new being that appeared in Jesus but also in other spiritual masters in history.”<sup>160</sup>

These views continue today. Sallie McFague states as a matter of fact that “religious language in the Judeo-Christian tradition excludes us all, for it is largely biblical language; hence its assumptions concerning cultural, social, and political matters are not ours.”<sup>161</sup> The end result of the modern thought is a theological compromise: a departure from an understanding of the God of the Bible as revealed in the Bible. Theologies and ideas that redefine God in this way, such as “Primal Matrix” or “Empowering Matrix”<sup>162</sup> are creating a new god and a new religion. It is God made in man’s image instead of man made in God’s image. It is the other tree: a rejection of God’s instruction and revelation. Bloesch states that, “to resymbolize is to redeify, it is to fashion a new God more in accord with our cultural context and experience.”<sup>163</sup> Feminist theologian, Rosemary Reuther, admits to the emergence of this new god, “A new God is being born in our hearts to teach us to level the heavens and exalt the earth and create a new world without masters and slaves, rulers and subjects.”<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>160</sup>Bloesch, 86.

<sup>161</sup>SallieMcFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language*(Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982), 8.

<sup>162</sup>Bloesch, 85.

<sup>163</sup>*Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>164</sup>Rosemary Reuther, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1983), 11.

These smatterings of theology are included as a prolegomena to show the contrast with the author's theological position which operates within several constraints. The first constraint is that the subject will be the God of the Bible. The second constraint is that the starting point will be God as opposed to starting with man, culture, creation, or reason. The third constraint is that the source will be the Bible. The appropriate place to begin is the doctrine of creation.

### Creation

Three primary contrasting views regarding the nature of creation are *ex material*, creation out of matter (materialists); *ex Deo*, creation out of God (pantheists); and *ex nihilo*, creation by God out of nothing (theists).<sup>165</sup> *Ex nihilo* was established as the official Christian doctrine of creation, in 1215 at the Forth Lateran Council.<sup>166</sup> Implications of God's "creation out of nothing" imply that God acted freely and His creation is purposeful. This is clear in the order of the creation account in Genesis 1-2. Also, McKim argues the theological significance of *ex nihilo*: "God as sole Creator means no thing or no one else may be worshiped. All forms of idolatry are prohibited."<sup>167</sup> Erikson states, "That humans are created means that they have no independent existence. They may declare themselves independent and then conduct themselves as if they are, but that does not alter the fact that their very life and each breath they continue to take is from

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<sup>165</sup> Normal L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2003), 423.

<sup>166</sup> D. K. McKim, "Doctrine of Creation," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 304.

<sup>167</sup> McKim, 305.

God.”<sup>168</sup> The reality of *ex nihilo* encourages man to remember that creation depends upon and serves the Creator God. McKim recognizes man’s freedom to respond to God’s plan, “Human creatures have been given freedom and intelligence which may be used either to affirm or deny the fundamental relationship of existence, dependence on God.”<sup>169</sup>

Second, the doctrine of Creation is important because it shows God’s intention for man. This is emphasized in the biblical foundation section. God created a living being, *nepesh*, to have vitality of life.<sup>170</sup> The garden was created for man. He was made to rule and subdue: man in submission to God and man ruling over creation. All of this was to function in and through right relationships. Shelly notes that “the Christian faith then recognizes two realities: God, the self-existent One, and the visible and invisible creation—the dependent universe... the Bible does not then describe the ‘how’ of creation so much as the ‘why.’”<sup>171</sup> The ‘why’ of creation reveals who God is—a good God with a good plan seen in His perfect environment in the garden with man, creation, and God in harmony. The picture clarifies God’s intention for man for blessing, health, and wholeness.

Third, Genesis 1-2 shows the goodness of His creation. Each day’s orderly and purposeful creation was affirmed by Creator God with, “God saw that it was

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<sup>168</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 510-11.

<sup>169</sup> McKim, 305.

<sup>170</sup> H. Seebass, “*nepes*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterwick, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, vol. 9. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 504.

<sup>171</sup> Bruce L. Shelly, *Christian Theology in Plain Language* (Waco, TX: Word Books Publishers, 1985), 74.

good.”<sup>172</sup>McKim’s view is that “the Christian doctrine of creation over against monistic pantheism affirms that creaturely existence is real because God created it and it is thus “good” if it is in relation to God.”<sup>173</sup> The simplicity of God’s perspective and pleasure with His work cannot be ignored when it comes to man’s brokenness in body, soul, and spirit. Creation teaches that what God does is good. He is not the one who rapes. He is not the one who torments the mind. He is not the one inciting hatred. He is not the one creating hunger. He is not the one lying to men. Rather, the goodness of God and the evidence of His good provision in the garden strengthens the expectation of God’s intervening hand in the broken lives of men and women.

Next, the biblical creation account stresses the relational nature of God. These relational intentions resulting in wholeness were not stamped out with man’s choice to rebel. Rather, God’s goodness and provision are evident despite man’s freedom. McKim notes that, “in creation and in God’s continuing sustaining and providing for creation, God is working out his ultimate purposes for humanity and the world. This means human life can be meaningful, intelligible, and purposeful even in the face of evil ... or ‘anything else in all creation,’ because life can be grounded in ‘the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’”<sup>174</sup>

The greatest contribution of the doctrine of creation is that it answers the question, “What does God want?” One of the biggest stumbling blocks to people worldwide is how a good God could abide such intense human suffering. Even within the Christian

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<sup>172</sup> Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31.

<sup>173</sup>McKim, 305.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

community, the biggest stumbling block to healing and wholeness is questioning the will of God in the specific situation. Creation reveals God's intention. He wants wholeness. He created it originally. Then He created a plan to restore it. This is who He is. The goodness, beauty, peace, and order of creation show us how God sees things. This is why man has hope and this is the foundation for a theology of wholeness. Bloesch agrees with this conviction affirming that he is, "celebrating a God who moves and acts both in nature and history...Our God is ceaselessly acting and moving to bring the world to its completion and fulfillment in the kingdom of God."<sup>175</sup>

Creation calls for redemption. God has a plan to restore creation and mankind to His original goodness. This is the holistic life that He wants for man. Bloesch recognizes the restoration process through God's plan of redemption, "Creation can be understood only in the light of redemption, because human sin blocks a right understanding of creation. Creation does not prepare the way for redemption, but redemption restores and elevates creation."<sup>176</sup> Therefore, wholeness, salom, sozo, and salvation all go hand-in-hand with the doctrine of creation.

Despite God's clarity on creation, man has been determined to turn again to the other tree for knowledge. As noted above, once the subject of theology and the source of knowledge about the God of the Bible is replaced with the other tree, a new religion and god unfolds. A classic demonstration of this is natural theology which unfortunately confuses Creator and creature<sup>177</sup> and seeks to find God in nature. "Mother Nature" is a

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<sup>175</sup>Bloesch, 183.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>177</sup> Rom. 1:24-25, "Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."

popular term and a non-biblical idea. As Bloesch clarifies, “Nature may be designated as our sister but not as our mother.”<sup>178</sup> This faulty confusion between Creator and creature deals a striking blow to man’s pathway to wholeness. Hunsinger explains the danger of natural theology. He sees it as “presaging the loss of the prophetic dimension of Christian faith, for if there is not a God who stands over and against nature and history, then there is no criterion that can judge nature and history.”<sup>179</sup> Furthermore, if God does not stand over and against nature, then He does not act supernaturally over nature.

Lastly, “In the beginning, God,” shows God’s own view of the importance of creation. The starting point for God’s self-revelation in the Bible was not Jesus, love, or redemption. His starting point was, “God created the heavens and the earth.” As creator, He can do anything. The clay does give counsel to the potter (Is. 45:9). Therefore man does counsel God (Job 38-40). The image of a handicapped God limited by the laws of science, nature, culture, or the universe is offensive to God.

Man’s best response to the mystery and tension of his limited understanding is to reflect again on the doctrine of creation. Sit at the feet of Job and learn from him as a fellow sojourner, “Then Job answered the Lord and said, ‘I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.... I have declared that which I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me....Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.’” (Job. 42:1-6). The doctrine of creation is a most refreshing reminder that

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<sup>178</sup>Bloesch, 176.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 177.

God can and will intervene on man's behalf for his well-being as seen with Job. If it requires a miracle, so be it. This does not hinder God in any way.

### God

Instead of reducing or redefining God, it is better to acknowledge and thank God for the truth as revealed in the Bible.<sup>180</sup> From this revelation alone, man comes to understand God. One such voice was Karl Barth (1886-1968). His unyielding defense of God's transcendence is arguably more relevant now than even during his own time. Bacik summarizes Barth's sensitivity to man's propensity, "From the beginning of history, human beings have sought equality with God, often by reducing him to human proportions. The human heart knows the desire to manipulate and control the deity," and Barth's passionate response: "Barth's theology challenges every tendency to identify God with our personal desires, feelings, and thoughts."<sup>181</sup>

Mankind does not exist outside of his relationship with God his creator and sustainer. Emil Brunner (1889-1966) states: "The mysterious God, whom the world neither knows nor shows, whom I do not know and whom the inner man does not reveal, must reveal his mystery to the world—must tell his own name—by 'piercing' into the

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<sup>180</sup> Rom. 1:20-23, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures."

<sup>181</sup> James J. Bacik, *Contemporary Theologians* (New York, NY: Triumph Books, 1936), 104.



world.”<sup>182</sup> God did exactly this. He initiated His own self-revelation to man and pierced into the world as the man Jesus Christ.

Bloesch states that, “We cannot name God because God is hidden from our sight and understanding. God must name himself, and he has done so in Holy Scripture.”<sup>183</sup> As man’s creator, God knows what man needs. His revelation is perfect and need not be corrected. It is in this correct understanding of God’s self-revelation that clarity is found on God’s intention for man to experience an imminent God involved in man’s dilemmas, through His liberating power, leading man into redemption and wholeness. This same God is transcendent, ready to trump any natural or spiritual law or limitation in order to deliver man from bondage to freedom. This is the whole story of the Bible.

God’s first self-revelation is Yahweh—the “One who is,” or “I am who I am,” or “I am He who is.” This foundational revelation of God is found in Exodus 3:14, “I AM” or Yahweh. This is the answer Moses was to give the Israelites when they asked Moses, “Who sent you?” The I AM, the one who is, or “I will be what I will be” is the one who sent Moses. The narrative is immediately followed by a demonstration of God’s mighty acts to deliver the Hebrew people from their bondage in Egypt and certain destruction in the wilderness. This was God’s inaugural address to His people.

The timing of these events shows the intention of God. The I AM declares His immanence. He is intimately aware of their conditions as seen in the whole story of calling Moses to be their deliverer. Yet He is transcendent and shows His people his infinite “otherness” with the powerful signs and wonders that made God famous in Egypt

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<sup>182</sup> Emil Brunner, *Theology of Crisis* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons Publishers, 1929), 31.

<sup>183</sup> Bloesch, 81.

and ensured the Hebrew peoples' escape from oppression. The whole experience is nothing but miracles of provision interlaced with personal encounters. This is what God wants.

Just as the garden sets a precedent showing what God wants, again the Exodus narrative sets a new precedent and reiterates God's objective. He wants a personal relationship and obedience. In that, He delights in blessing. The blessings are to make man flourish and to make him fruitful. The Hebrews are promised a land flowing with milk and honey. It is a new "garden" within the fallen world reality. It shows that God's intention has not changed. Sin and evil do not divert His mission.

The second I AM of God in the Bible is equally revealing: "I am the Lord who heals you" (Ex. 15:26). This is not something God does like an action, though healing involves action. Rather "healer" is something God is. He Himself has an inherent nature and healing is part of that nature. As Bloesch notes, God's nature is in His names, especially "I AM" and "I am the Lord who heals you" and revelations in which, "Transcendence discloses its inner-most being to us."<sup>184</sup> The inner-most nature of God is to interact with man, showing man that He sees every detail of life, that He has the power and stands ready to deliver man from every danger and every threat to man's vitality of life. This image of God is substantiated by the triune God developed more fully in the New Testament.

### Trinity

The God of the Bible begins with Yahweh in the Old Testament. He is the I AM working to bless His people so that they will bless others (Gen. 12:1-3). His mind is for

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 83.

all people. Even before this, in the creation account, the biblical record begins with reference that He is a multi-dimensional God, “Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, according to *Our* likeness” (Gen. 1:26). There is an “us” factor to God and yet God reminds Israel, “the Lord your God is one” (Deut. 6:4). The theology for this is the doctrine of the trinity—Father, Jesus, and Holy Spirit. All are committed to bringing restoration to wholeness to the whole man.

Jesus’ mission is marked by the word “*sozo*.” This word is used to characterize the result of Jesus’ ministry. In English the word is “save.” Because of an overemphasis on the spiritual aspect of “*sozo*” the holistic reality of the word and Jesus’ actions have been overshadowed. The biblical record shows that “*sozo*” describes restoration to wholeness for body (Matt. 9:22; Mk. 10:52), soul (Lk. 8:36; 2 Tim. 4:18), and spirit (Rom. 10:9; Lk. 7:50). Middleton and Gorman argue that the biblical text is so clear on the comprehensive meaning of *sozo* that “failure to translate these texts with forms of the English verb ‘save’ perpetuates the theological error that Jesus’ restoration of people to physical wholeness is something other than salvation.”<sup>185</sup>

The Holy Spirit continues the revelation Jesus began, which is also inextricable linked to the Father, “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose *it* to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose *it* to you.” (John 16:12-15). He convicts of sin (Jn. 16:9); He leads

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<sup>185</sup> J. Richard Middleton and Michael L. Gorman, “Salvation,” in *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, vol. 5. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009), 56.

the believer in righteous choices (Jn. 16:10); and He reminds the devil he is defeated (Jn. 16:11).

The Holy Spirit is the intervening presence of God in the world today. He is the source of the ongoing victory over Satan, the continual expansion of the Kingdom of God. In God's perfect understanding of how to empower man to walk in victory now, He envisioned the believer fully equipped by the Holy Spirit. There are gifts and fruits of the Spirit-filled life (Gal. 5, 1 Cor. 12, 14). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth by which man gains freedom. He continues what was started in the garden, restoring man to wholeness in body, soul, and spirit. The Bible portrays the Holy Spirit as a personal and consistent companion of Jesus' followers empowering them to continue to minister the same *sozo* power of God to release salvation for both the Jew and the Gentile (Rom. 1:16-18).

Man is thus given a triune God of the Bible—Father, Son, and Spirit. They are all working in perfect unison and agreement to restore man to God's original idea in the garden: "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons" (1 Cor. 12:4-6). Packer notes that this triune God is the "'name' into which disciples of Jesus are to be baptized . . . the tri-personal name of three distinguishable though evidently inseparable agents, 'the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit'" (Matt. 28:19). This is God's 'Christian name,' as Barth happily put it."<sup>186</sup> The names and works of the trinity in Scripture show us God's intention. Man is called to be in submission to and agreement with the revelation of this triune God: a loving and good

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<sup>186</sup> J. I. Packer, "God," in *New Dictionary of Theology*, eds. Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, and J.I. Packer (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1988), 275.

father, an obedient son, Jesus, who restores man to his good Father, and the perpetual and personal Spirit of God at man's side giving him the power to overcome and live in the light and truth of the kingdom of God now.

This is the evangelistic message—God's invitation to man as mankind awaits the ultimate fulfillment of God's full redemption and final annihilation of Satan's access to humanity. Until that time, humanity remains subject to the battle between good and evil. Man's personal and collective struggle in this battle is defined as sin.

### Sin

The theology of restoration to wholeness begins with the question, "restoration from what?" The answer is the topic of sin. Sin is the Bible's answer to the essence of man's problem. Other theologies and philosophies have different answers and solutions. For the modern world, some conclude that man's problem is education. Things are moving forward and education will keep the forward momentum. Others have a pessimistic view. The situation is bleak and the problem is seen as economic exploitation and oppression. Though Karl Marx's socialistic solutions have no success stories, people still have not abandoned that ideology. As Shelly points out, "Experience raises disturbing questions about the idealism of both democratic liberalism and revolutionary Marxism. Something more basic than ignorance or oppression is wrong with man."<sup>187</sup>

It is clear that mankind is in great need. Education and socialism are not addressing the root. Christianity has the answer to the root problem of man. It is "sin." Not only does man have a sin problem but inherent in the problem is denial and

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<sup>187</sup> Shelly, 54.

projecting blame on others. The gospel writer captures this pervasive human phenomenon, “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed” (Jn. 3:19-20). Shelly states the irony of man’s refusal to acknowledge his sin, “as a result of this resistance of the Christians’ concept of sin and their use of the word, people are dying on every hand of a disease that they refuse to name. They have enlisted in a conspiracy of silence, apparently supporting that elimination of the word means elimination of the condition.”<sup>188</sup>

In contrast to being exposed by sin, acceptance of sin is the first step in being freed from the bondage of sin, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1:9). Sin must be confronted. It is the start of man’s restoration to wholeness and “it affirms that man was meant for health, for a full and fruitful life” and as such, “Christianity refuses to accept man’s sorry condition as permanent...his best days are ahead.”<sup>189</sup> The path forward is to understand and deal with sin.

The most common connotation with “sin” is “missing the mark.” This comes from the Hebrew verb *chata* (word family used around 600 times in the Old Testament) and the Greek verb *hamartano* (word family used almost 300 times in the New Testament).<sup>190</sup> The phrase, “missing the mark,” in the English context is a bit

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Erickson, 586-7.

misleading. It sounds like an accidental error, possibly from ignorance or oversight. But the usage in the Scripture carries the implication that the mark was missed intentionally.<sup>191</sup>

In addition to this common idea of sin, “missing the mark,” there are several other meanings of sin: ignorance (again with an intimation of willful ignorance such that the person is still responsible), error usually of a moral nature (such as Saul’s confession of error when he tried to kill David, 1 Sam. 26:21), inattention (such as, “how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation,” Heb. 2:3),<sup>192</sup> irreligion seen in behaviors contrary to God’s righteous instructions (such as, “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?,” 1 Cor. 6:9),<sup>193</sup> transgression (such as Numbers 15 when God tells the Hebrew people, after the ten spies give a negative report, not to go take the land but they insist on going.)<sup>194</sup> These are all essentially acts of sin—sinful choices.

Sin however, is a two-sided coin. On the one hand, sin involves the act of sin as already noted. The other side is the result of sin. In effect, the act of sin creates a sinful state of being. Whatever the situation or act of sin, the sinful state results in a displacement of God. The two trees in the garden remain a practical analogy for sin. God gives everything man needs along with all necessary instructions for things to continue to go well. But man chooses a sinful act. It results in man being in a sinful state with God.

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 586.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 583-5.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 588.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 592.

When man chose to replace God's wisdom and instruction with his own idea, he replaced God. This is the ultimate sin—thinking, choosing, and living independently from God.

This perpetual sinful state is often overlooked. Even the act of sin is overlooked as humanistic worldviews and modern theologies seek a new reality. But truth remains nonetheless. Man's condition is one of sinful acts and a sinful state. This condition compromises the holistic life. It leads to poverty of mind, will, and emotions. It is this condition from which man needs "salvation." Shelly describes man's perilous state: "The Christian view of sin is realistic because it explains both the dignity of man as a creature of God and the ruin of man in his self-chosen rebellion. Man has joined the ranks of the resistance. He is wandering through life far from his spiritual home, the only source of his true identity. Above every other concern, then, he needs to find his way back to his Father's house."<sup>195</sup>

Some make the distinction that the sinful act is a "cosmological matter, specific to the created world" whereas the sinful condition is a "disruption of our ontological relations to God" in that "we have broken covenant."<sup>196</sup> Neville stresses the fallout of this broken covenant: the "ontological evil" results in a "severe corruption" leaving man in a state of depravity causing a "corruption of the heart, mind, and will." The point is that man cannot sin in a vacuum. It sounds comforting but it is impossible. Every sin affects the whole of humanity.

The effects of man's free will and choosing independently of God's love and instruction means that man needs salvation from this depraved state affecting the whole

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<sup>195</sup> Shelly, 59-60.

<sup>196</sup> Robert C. Neville, *A Theology Primer* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 85-6.



being: body, soul and spirit; mind, will, and heart. Neville addresses the holistic goal of salvation: “the heart, mind and will cannot return to the covenant, to the right relations in which they should live to God...obsession of heart, narcissistic distortion of mind, and internal destructiveness of will are functions of self-condemnation. Because the offence is against the covenant and its creator, the creator must overcome depravity, and people are dependent radically on God.”<sup>197</sup> Man ultimately is lost and cannot save himself. There is only one way. This is the work of salvation.

### Salvation

Christianity goes hand-in-hand with the term “salvation.” Yet as common as the word is, the concept is subject to many different explanations. Marshall states that, “since New Testament times the doctrine of salvation has constantly been in danger of misunderstanding and corruption.”<sup>198</sup> One of the biggest errors addressed by the Protestant Reformation was the idea that salvation could be earned and was administered by a church and priest. Thanks to the Reformation man could come to God as he was, because he was “saved by grace.” The Catholic Church had “emphasized the objective sphere of salvation within a sacramental church,” whereas the Protestant thought emphasized “the subjective experience of salvation within the individual soul.”<sup>199</sup> The Reformation taught the body of Christ that, “the church must not usurp its place in

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<sup>197</sup> Neville, 88.

<sup>198</sup> I.H. Marshall, “Salvation,” in *New Dictionary of Theology*, eds. Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, and J. I. Packer (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1988), 610.

<sup>199</sup> R. E. O. White, “Salvation,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 1051.

declaring who can be saved, even if it is true that the church is appointed to proclaim the gospel.”<sup>200</sup>

The modern age continues to struggle with the means and scope of “salvation.” The ethical moral Jesus is favored over Jesus, the incarnate Son of God who alone mediates the new covenant as Lord and Savior over a lost humanity. Marshall states the problematic ramification of this displacement of *Yeshua*, “salvation has been thought of as exclusively deliverance from ignorance of God and not also as cleansing from sin and its guilt.”<sup>201</sup> White adds the cumulative impact of the empty, “good man” ideology: “Modern reflection tends to concentrate on the psychological process and ethical results of salvation, emphasizing the need to ‘save’ society.”<sup>202</sup> This temptation to “culturize” salvation has been facing theology for years and will continue. Tillich is a prime example.

Tillich personifies the tension between culture and religion. His analytical energy amidst the Nazi embodiment of human depravity gave him a critical view of oversimplified solutions to man’s problems. He warned against “superficial and misguided solutions to a deep cultural problem.”<sup>203</sup> Tillich’s struggle is not satisfied with liberation theology, natural theology, or the social gospel. The problem is spiritual and the solution must also be spiritual.

Marshall reiterates the core of the salvation problem: “People fail to realize that the major need of humanity is for reconciliation with God, and that it is only when there

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<sup>200</sup>Marshall, 610.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> White, 1051.

<sup>203</sup>Bacik, 120.

is peace between God and humanity that lasting peace between the people of the world is possible.”<sup>204</sup> Salvation is never an either/or proposition. It is both/and. It is for the individual and thereby affects the whole society. It delivers persons from strongholds of fear, anger, control and so on, and thereby creates more harmonious relationships among mankind. It calls for personal responsibility to serve your neighbor as well as civic and political governance that serves the whole constituency. No part of humanity is untouched with the salvation message and impact. This is because God is creator and He knows what humanity needs. His intentions were clear in the garden: a good environment, provision, right relationships all working in and through submission and commitment to a personal relationship with Him. This is what He is always working towards—the *telos* of God.

The breadth of the need of man is seen throughout history. What can be learned is that each stream of salvation reflects a part of God’s ultimate and comprehensive salvation. Horton captures the concreteness of salvation’s end for man, “that he needs deliverance above all *moral and religious wrongness* (sin) and cannot meet this need without turning to God for forgiveness and renewal—is at the center of every Christian definition of the word ‘salvation.’”<sup>205</sup> The confusion comes from looking at spiritual salvation of the soul as one aspect among many of salvation. Biblical salvation does bring redemption to all areas of man’s need, yet there is a root of salvation which then bears fruit in the others dimensions. That root is the spiritual man. Jesus said you must be born of the Spirit (Jn. 3:5).

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<sup>204</sup>Marshall, 611.

<sup>205</sup>Walter M. Horton, *Christian Theology: An Ecumenical Approach* (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1955), 152.

There is a cause and effect reality to true salvation. The individual's spiritual salvation and revelation of Jesus Christ then become a "cause" affecting relationships and the society as a whole. Neville stresses this reality, "salvation is the restoration of the broken covenant, which is at the same time the recompletion of the creation of the human sphere and its neighborhood."<sup>206</sup> Ultimately salvation is the answer to man's problems. God has created the solution and given man free will to choose, yet He implores man to choose life, "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants" (Deut. 30:19).

There is an active role for man to play in his salvation in that he responds to God's solution, and he participates in the redemptive work made possible through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Sin left man in a state of depravity in body, soul and spirit. God's answer is salvation—Jesus, *Yeshua*—Yahweh saves. Neville stresses the holistic nature of salvation and its importance in theological studies, "In order to sort through these problems that lie at the heart of theology, it is necessary to examine first the natural condition of freedom and then the empirical nature of sin at its worst; depravity of the heart, mind, and will."<sup>207</sup>

Man's true destiny is restoration to wholeness. This involves the body, soul, and spirit subject to the liberating power of God's love. The salvation of God in both the Old Testament and New Testament touched the whole person, relationships, and even the land. In the Old Testament, His perfect creation, His mighty acts, His deliverance from

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<sup>206</sup> Neville, 75-6.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 76.

Egypt, and His continued pattern of blessing obedience shows his intentions towards men. He is transcendent and immanent. He wants man to live at peace with his maker and his fellow man. This continues with the salvation of God through Jesus in the New Testament. He desires man to be in health in his whole being and his relationships (3 Jn. 2).<sup>208</sup> The most common word for salvation, *sozo*, is used in reference to spiritual healing; physical healing and mental healing.<sup>209</sup> Salvation is a complete package for man both individually and corporately.

### Theological Foundation Conclusion

The greatest contribution Christian theology can make to mankind is to submit to the God of the Bible as revealed in the Bible. Though there is a mystery to God and humanity's existence, and though tensions can be high between culture and faith, the answer remains in the abundance of revelation in the Bible. The direct revelation of the God of the Bible shows man's whole existence in relationship with His creator. Evil, individual sin, and the sinful state of people and cultures leaves man in bondage of heart, mind, will, spirit, and body. God's holistic answer is *Yeshua*—Yahweh saves. The evidence of both the Old Testament and New Testament shows that the scope of "salvation" is the whole person.

Salvation is the both/and of God's brilliance. He has not forgotten anything. Liberation theology is a misnomer because God already liberates and leads man to serve his fellow man. Relational theology is redundant as well. There could not be anything

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<sup>208</sup> "Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers" (3 John 2).

<sup>209</sup> Acts 4:12, Rom. 10:9, Lk. 7:50, Eph. 2:8, Mt. 9:22, Mt. 10:52, Acts 4:9, 14:9, 2 Tim. 4:18, Lk. 8:36.

more inherent in God's plan than right relationships between man and God and man and his neighbor, as simply stated by Jesus' answer to the Pharisee lawyer: "'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?' And He said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets'" (Matt. 22:36-40). Feminist theology again is an awkward misapplication overlooking the unity and equal access all men and women have to Creator God, "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is *neither male nor female*; for *you are all one* in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:27-29).

It seems that after two thousand years man has found no better answer than what God has already provided and laid out in His Word. Education, liberation, revolution, science, inclusion, atheism, coexistence and all other human insights—stand face to face with a world wrought with evil. It is seen in both developing and developed nations. It is among the poor and the rich. This era stands even closer to depravity as it faces not only evil but a people who glory in their shame, "and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them" (Rom. 1:32).

Man's need is the God of the Bible as revealed in the Bible. It is time for men and women to understand that God is good. He thought of everything. His intention is for man to be healthy in body, soul, and spirit. Mankind is fully dependent on Him. He gave

man a way to fight the evil in this world. It is available equally to all men and women in all conditions. It is through faith and response to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. This response to Jesus must honor Jesus' final instructions to receive the "gift" God had planned for man's well-being and continued salvation, after Christ. This is the promised Holy Spirit. When men and women fully humble themselves and receive the good gift God has provided in the Holy Spirit, then the fullest effects of salvation will occur. It will educate. It will liberate. It will reconcile. It will honor women. It will serve the poor. Jesus said to receive this promise.

Continued resistance to the fullness of the Holy Spirit throughout history is without doubt part of mankind's dilemma. It is time for theology and praxis to look again at the simple truths of the Bible. God does not need a new name and He has not forgotten or ignored the plights of certain men. The Holy Spirit's power will deliver men and women from the strongholds that prevent them from living in the full blessings God intends for them. When this transformation touches a person, it touches the society. This does not mean a new theology must be developed called "Holy Spirit Theology." Rather, since the power of the Holy Spirit is plainly stated in Scripture, what is needed is simply faithfulness to the source of theology, the Bible itself.

### **Theoretical Conclusion**

This chapter has shown the biblical, historical, and theological considerations related to the author's experience and questions regarding evangelism. The questions are as basic as it gets: What is the good news? How do we share it? The next chapter

discusses how the author's experience, along with the theoretical underpinnings evolved into a practical project for her ministry.



## CHAPTER THREE

### INTEGRATION OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

#### Literature Review

A theme evident in the author's journey is the reality that there are people who are not getting access to the gospel. From the first encounters with Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists in college, the author has wondered why, after two thousand years, there are people without adequate exposure and examples of the gospel. David Barrett, whose work is synonymous with missions research, summarizes the situation as of 2005: those who are unevangelized number 1,800,228,000 people and represent 27.9 percent of the world's population. The extrapolation into 2025 reports an increase in the number of unevangelized people to 2,034,713,000 with a slight decrease in percentage of the world population to 25.9 percent.<sup>210</sup>

The good news is that as a worldwide church we are asking questions, seeking answers, and many are even daring to propose that we can reach all the remaining unreached peoples in our generation. This may seem obvious, but in missions history, this goal of intentional efforts to reach all specific people groups in the world is a rather new concept. Ralph Winter, a missionary statesman, shares insight into the beginning days of what are now common missions objectives. "In the 1970s, the Lord began to open the eyes of many to the fact that the irreducibly essential mission task of a breakthrough in

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<sup>210</sup>Barrett, David B., Todd M. Johnson, and Peter F. Crossing, "Missiometrics 2005: A global survey of world mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 29 (2005): 29.

every people group was a doable task. At the time, over half of the world's population lived within unreached people groups. Even so, a small group of mission activists had the faith to believe that if a movement could be mobilized to focus attention on the unreached peoples, which for a time were called 'hidden peoples,' then the essential mission task could be completed within a few decades."<sup>211</sup>

The study of missiology was birthed in part to address the complexities of issues related to world evangelization. In the past we could claim ignorance of the reality, but in more recent years, we are well informed. Those in the West, especially, have resources, training, organizations, and opportunities ready to harness our involvement. Barrett documents 4,340 missions sending organizations worldwide as of 2005.<sup>212</sup> Globally prayer efforts are arguably unmatched by any other time in human history.<sup>213</sup> However, the statistics of the remaining task are a painful reminder that something is missing. The author believes it is worth pausing to ask some questions and to join the ongoing missiological dialogue.

### The Gospel of Modern Missions

A holistic gospel which reflects the God of the Bible promising and providing healing for the body, soul and spirit might seem like a core ingredient for missions but unfortunately this is far from the case. Charles Kraft, professor and missionary to Africa,

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<sup>211</sup> Ralph D. Winter and Bruce A. Koch, "Finishing the Task," *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, 19:4 Winter, 2002, 21.

<sup>212</sup> Barrett, David B, "Missiometrics 2005: A global survey of world mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 29.

<sup>213</sup> Tom Hess, *The Watchman*, (Jerusalem, Israel: Progressive Vision International, 1998) for a survey of global prayer watches with 24/7 focus.

was motivated by his own encounter with what he calls a powerless Christianity, as noted in his book, *Confronting Powerless Christianity*. He tells of his experience as a missionary to Nigeria where he realized he did not have more than a propositional gospel to offer the people who were trapped in demonic darkness.<sup>214</sup> Fortunately, his story did not stop there. After exposure to John Wimber's revelation of power evangelism at Fuller Seminary, Kraft discovered the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit as noted in another work, *Christianity with Power*.<sup>215</sup> As a professor, missionary, and scholar, Kraft provides a wealth of insight into the question of how we do missions.

As the author noted, her practical missions experience in Tanzania has created tensions which form the backdrop of this project. In *Communicating and Ministering the Power of the Gospel Cross-Culturally*, Kraft captures the author's personal observations. Kraft describes a Tanzanian pastor's experience during a time of demonic deliverance. The demon spoke to the pastor claiming that he would overpower the pastor. The reason the demon gave was because, "your people ride two horses." As Kraft explains, allegiance to Jesus is one horse and faithful dependence on the power of Satan is the other horse.<sup>216</sup> Thus the two horses are Jesus and Satan. Though we have sent missionaries, spent millions of dollars, suffered death, loss and more, a sobering reality is that as a result of our Western Christianity not meeting the spiritual felt needs of the people, "Tanzania and a majority of the rest of the world who have been converted to such

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<sup>214</sup> Charles H. Kraft, *Confronting Powerless Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Chosen Books, 2002), 11-17.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 1989.

<sup>216</sup> Gary S. Greig and Kevin N. Springer. *The Kingdom and the Power*, "Communicating and Ministering the Power of the Gospel Cross-Culturally" by Charles H. Kraft and Marguerite G. Kraft, 345.

powerless Christianity continue to make use of their traditional power sources.”<sup>217</sup> The author shares resolve with Kraft that something must change.

### The Origin of the Modern Western Gospel

It is fair to say the origins of a powerless Christianity can be traced back to the 1500s during the time of Luther and Calvin. As noted earlier, miracles presented a problem for the reformers. Ruthven points out in *What's Wrong with Protestant Theology*, the reformers did not embrace miracles because they were associated with confirmation of doctrine: “John Calvin...managed to turn a serious disadvantage (no miracles to accredit doctrine) into a convincing virtue.”<sup>218</sup> Over time, even centuries, the reformers’ influence on the gospel of modern protestant missions has been overwhelming. Luther’s personal revelation—the just shall live by faith and salvation is in faith alone—still imprints most missions endeavors today. Yet the tide is turning.

### Global Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement and Missions

Even though the reformation influence is still seen, there is a new, even greater influence in missions. The refreshing in-breaking of the Holy Spirit onto the global scene over the last one-hundred years has been so dramatic that it has become its own field of study. Harvey Cox, Harvard University professor, calls it a new reformation. Whereas the reformation of Luther and Calvin primarily dealt with controversies,<sup>219</sup> Cox distinguishes

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 346.

<sup>218</sup> Jon Ruthven, *What's Wrong with Protestant Theology*, 17.

<sup>219</sup> See John Ruthven’s *What's Wrong with Protestant Theology* for a careful examination of the issues raised as a result of Protestant Reformation’s reaction to Catholic abuses.

the new reformation as prioritizing “the importance of experience in the Christian life, the restoration of healing as an integral part of the gospel, and the realization of Jesus’ announcement of the coming of the kingdom of God on earth, especially with its promise of justice and dignity for the disinherited and excluded people of the world.”<sup>220</sup>

Whereas the Protestant Reformation may be credited with correcting how we receive the good news, the global Pentecostal/Charismatic movement is actively seeking to restore the scope of the goodness of the good news. We are moving closer towards bringing a faithful witness of this whole gospel to all nations as Jesus commanded us.<sup>221</sup> Candy Brown documents the unstoppable force in her comprehensive work, *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*.<sup>222</sup> Her work shows the impact of this restored good news with power to transform lives as seen in specific regions of North America, South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia—a truly global phenomenon.

A prior classic work testifying to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit is John Wimber’s *Power Evangelism*.<sup>223</sup> This work is a witness to the impact one person can make in the body of Christ as well the world. Wimber’s conversion and conviction is powerful because it is not religious nor denominationally bound. Wimber just wanted to “do the stuff” as he called it, referring to the miracles, signs, and wonders which Jesus commanded us to do.

<sup>220</sup> Candy Gunther Brown, *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, xvii-xviii.

<sup>221</sup> Matthew 24:14.

<sup>222</sup> Candy Gunther Brown, *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>223</sup> John Wimber, John and Kevin S. Springer, *Power Evangelism* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row Publishers, 1986).

A contemporary leader actively involved in power evangelism and healing is Randy Clark. Not only is Clark an international healing minister, his undying commitment is also to impartation. He believes the body is to be doing the work of power evangelism. This is highlighted in his work, *There is More*.<sup>224</sup> Even more tied to this project is Clark's work, *Supernatural Missions*, which deals with the question, "How does the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit impact the way we understand and do missions?"<sup>225</sup> Clark agrees that the "difference is in how the gospel is presented."<sup>226</sup> This is the challenge and opportunity of evangelism.

### Models of Global Missions

It is true that this Pentecostal/Charismatic movement is inextricably linked with missions. Yet we must distinguish the supernatural explosion of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement across the globe with intentional strategies for completing the evangelistic task among the unreached. What has happened as the Holy Spirit has descended at various places and times is that as a result many get involved in missions and those missionary efforts include the power of the Holy Spirit. But that does not at all mean that missions efforts in general are empowered by the Spirit. To the contrary, the ongoing effort to reach the world by perpetually improving strategies and increasing information is not typically built upon a foundation of signs and wonders as a main evangelistic tool. Furthermore it is also not common to see missions strategies begin

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<sup>224</sup> Randy Clark. *There is More, Reclaiming the Power of Impartation*(Mechanicsburg, PA: Global Awakening, 2006).

<sup>225</sup> Clark, *Supernatural Missions*, 1.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

with a demonstration of power over the spiritual strongholds of the people as the primary evangelistic message.

What is more common over the last fifty years in the discussion of world evangelization includes ideas such as the social gospel, liberation theology, inclusion, and post-modernism. Brief mention will be given to these ideas as they remain factors impacting the active missionary force, sending agencies and churches, as well as expectations of individual supporters.

As noted earlier, the Protestant Reformation was a shaping force in modern missions resulting in a priority on proclamation. The goal was for the listener to agree and accept the information. In the last several decades the cry for social action has brought a balance to the proclamation. The good news should have some good actions for the people. Many organizations today with a global impact reflect this influence, such as World Vision, Samaritan's Purse, and Compassion International.

### Post-Modernism Influence

The postmodern contribution goes so far as to suggest that those in unreached areas may in fact have legitimate expressions of “salvation” apart from Christ. Pieter Verster, Director of Missiology at University of the Free State, South Africa, validates the impact of postmodern thought in his work, *A Theology of Christian Mission*. In discussing religious pluralism and missions he states, “The question now remains: is it possible to read the Old Testament and the New Testament from a perspective that allows one to admit that the Bible only reveals part of the revelation of God regarding *salvation*, and that it represents such a partial revelation that the full revelation regarding *salvation*

can only be found by throwing multi-colored facets of all the different religions together?”<sup>227</sup>

Bosch highlights the urgency of this impact on our mission mandate in *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (1991). In response to postmodern thought accompanied by growing world religions he surmises that, “Christians in the West have been jolted out of their complacency” and he poses the question as to whether or not, “the Christian Church and mission are equipped to respond to the challenge emanating from the religions.”<sup>228</sup>

One might think that postmodern thought is a not a factor influencing our missions in the remote villages of Africa. From the author’s own context however, Verster provides a prime example which deals with ancestral spirits showing the postmodern impact to our missions efforts: “In Africa, the question of the importance of ancestors is relevant. If Jesus is regarded merely as one of the more important ancestors, why was it necessary for Him to become the crucified one? ...Is He really the unique one who makes the difference, or should we—for the sake of religious pluralism—decide to accept the idea of Christ as one of the ancestors?”<sup>229</sup>

In the ever-evolving humanistic world, the good moral teacher Jesus is acceptable but the unique Savior Jesus is being relegated, reduced, and rescinded. Our missions efforts must not only be prepared to share the good news but we must be more prepared to answer, “Why Christianity?” amongst the prevailing inclusion mandate. Hans Yong

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<sup>227</sup> Pieter Verster, *A Theology of Christian Mission* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), 164.

<sup>228</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 488.

<sup>229</sup> Verster 165.



wrestles with this issue in his work, *On Being a Christian*: “Today Christianity is involved everywhere in a *double confrontation* with the great world religions on the one hand and with the non-Christian ‘secular’ humanisms on the other. And today the question is... compared with the world religions and modern humanisms, is Christianity something essentially different, really something special?”<sup>230</sup>

This attitude is pervasive reaching even into missions agencies, academics and missionary training. Lewis, professor and former missionary to the Muslim world, argues that requiring a tribal person to be called “Christian” and pass through the Christian religion is parallel to Jews who required Gentiles to pass through Jewish laws to follow Christ.<sup>231</sup> She proposes that “the gospel reveals that a person can gain a new spiritual identity without leaving one’s birth identity, and without taking on a new socio-religious label or going through the religion of either Judaism or Christianity” such that “people do not even have to go through the religion of Christianity, but only through Jesus Christ, to enter God’s family.” Corwin comments on the impact of these repercussions in his critique of the evolution of missions research. He assesses, “Without doubt the most serious affront has been in sloughing off as unimportant that most basic of questions, ‘What does it mean to be a Christian? Is calling one a Christian all that is necessary?’” The author supports Corwin’s warning that this is a faulty and dangerous path.

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<sup>230</sup> Hans Yung, *On Being A Christian* (New York, New York: Doubleday Press, 1976), 25.

<sup>231</sup> Rebecca Lewis, *Insider Movements: Honoring God-given Identity and Community*, *International Journal of Frontier Mission* (26:1 Spring), 2009, 18.

## Moving Forward

It is in the midst of these fractures, losing our moorings to basic Christian concepts, and abandoning traditional conversion frameworks, that God released the world-wide phenomenon of the Holy Spirit. God's answer to the times appears to be keeping Jesus front and center with the Holy Spirit being the faithful witness through power and love. As the theme of the theoretical chapter clarifies, God's self-revelation in the whole counsel of the Word is that when He makes Himself known to humanity, He does so with signs and wonders. This is the hope for biblical missions.

The models associated with the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement include powerful evangelists who move in signs and wonders leading many into salvation. Reinhard Bonnke is a great example. His model of power evangelism is provided in his book, *Evangelism By Fire*.<sup>232</sup> Bonnke along with others, though less visible, provide powerful models of combining intentional missions efforts with the power of the Holy Spirit to reach masses of people.

Randy Clark, founder of Global Awakening, is another example. But not only is Clark making an impact, he is training thousands of others to do the same. A model which Clark is known for is the international missions trips in which teams travel with Clark overseas and are released to minister alongside him. The testimonies consistently include miracles, healings, deliverances, and salvations. This model is working and its impact is seen all around the world.

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<sup>232</sup>Reinhard Bonnke, *Evangelism by Fire, Keys for Effectively Reaching Others with the Gospel* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma Media, 2011).

Though the powerful evangelist and the international mission trips are positive and bearing much fruit, the author's focus is on how evangelism is approached on the field by missionaries and nationals alike in the everyday environment. One problem the author has encountered is personal experiences where miracles have occurred but the local people view the local pastor as a "spiritual man" who has power just like the witchdoctor has power. In one case a mother whose son was healed, was determined to pay for the "service" since she was used to paying the witchdoctor. She came to the church repeatedly to pay the pastor though he refused. This is one example of why the crusade and trip style ministries must be supported by the ongoing ministry of folks in the field who can continue to explain the power behind the miracles. Jesus had harsh rebukes for those who saw the miracles but still did not believe.<sup>233</sup> We need ministry models which do not see the supernatural as an end in itself but rather as a way of leading people into a saving faith in Christ.

Additionally the crusade and ministry trip models do not deal with the allegiance to two horses—Jesus and Satan—explained earlier. Many can be drawn to healing and even profess salvation during events but in reality, they may be adding an allegiance to Jesus while retaining their allegiance to witchcraft. Again the local missionaries and leaders will need to have their own evangelistic strategies which are intent on distinguishing Jesus from other gods, connecting his power to heal with the salvation of the soul, as well as addressing syncretistic tendencies which have gone unchecked for too long.

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<sup>233</sup> Luke 10:13.

One example that comes closer to what the author envisions is Iris Ministries founded by Rolland and Heidi Baker, missionaries to Mozambique. They are well known for using healing as a means of evangelism. They gather sick people, pray for healing and then the crusade begins. Blind are healed, the deaf hear, and the crippled walk. They also see changes in those who are downtrodden. Many aspire to one of their mantras, “love the one in front of you.” Their inspiring story is captured in their book, *Always Enough*.<sup>234</sup>

This need for a living testimony before the people cannot be over-emphasized. Bosch attests that though context may warrant variations in our missions models, “people will never believe what they hear—no matter how attractive it may sound—if it is blatantly contradicted by what they see and experience. All our efforts at renewal in the areas of evangelism...are futile unless something is done about the credibility of our lives. The Church is frequently an obstacle rather than an aid to the gospel because she allows her life and conduct to obscure her witness and make it impotent.”<sup>235</sup>

### Conjunction

We have discussed the need to finish the task, the need for demonstrating the present reality of the good news through healing of the body, soul, and spirit, the need for distinguishing Jesus amidst a pluralistic world, and the need to reaffirm the notion of becoming a “Christian” as a valid concept. The author sees these ingredients as a normal part of evangelism mobilization in Tanzania.

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<sup>234</sup> Rolland Baker and Heidi Baker, *Always Enough: God's Miraculous Provision Among the Poorest Children on Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2003).

<sup>235</sup> David Bosch, *Witness to the World* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1980), 229.

The next section addresses how the vision of evangelism which demonstrates healing of body, soul, and spirit merge with the author's context of evangelism and mobilization in remote African tribes. The author believes the biblical basis for evangelism applies to all cultures in all generations. Thus this mandate will be looked at in light of current evangelistic experiences and observations the author has had over the last five years in Tanzania.

### Holistic Gospel: A Hope for Tanzania

The Tanzanian people have an extremely strong spirituality. Their belief in God is absolute. Simultaneously, witchcraft is part of life. To give a perspective of the present power of witchcraft operating in Tanzania, a study by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public life conducted across nineteen African nations including 25,000 face-to-face interviews, found that among African nations, Tanzanians hold the strongest belief in witchcraft.<sup>236</sup>

The specific context for this project is the Sonjo tribe. The Sonjo are a tribal people following a traditional African religion. They believe in one god, named Hambegeo. He was a man whom they believe came from outside to live in the Sonjo. He did many signs, wonders, and miracles which led the people to believe in him as god.

The people speak of the rules that bind them under Hambegeo and though they are resistant to change, they do not speak of their religion with joy and pride as compared to some other tribes such as the traditional Maasai people, who speak boldly of their

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<sup>236</sup> Barnett, Errol, "Witchcraft in Tanzania: the good, bad, and the persecution," last modified October 8, 2012, accessed October 15, 2012, <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/10/05/world/africa/tanzania-witchcraft>.

religion and why it is good. The comments by Sonjo about their religion are far different. Going into the project, the author already had an insight into this heaviness of the religion and the fear of breaking Hambegeo's rules, which bound the people. It did not take long among the Sonjo people to see their need for a power encounter with the God of gods.

### Project Overview

This project is birthed in the challenge of completing the task, the struggle with the complexities of implementing cross-cultural evangelism, and the determined interest to learn more. The anticipated outcome of this effort is to experience more informed and effective evangelistic efforts in the author's current context which is unreached tribes in Tanzania which practice traditional tribal religions. The section below summarizes how the author merged the emphasis of holistic healing evangelism with a missiological objective to design a research model.

### Research Model Overview

After a few years of evangelism and training leaders, the author began to see the need for more power evangelism in the unreached villages. This refers to evangelism which follows Jesus' model. His model was one of proclamation and demonstration of the power of God which opened the spiritual eyes, healed the physical body, and delivered the mind from demonic strongholds. The author's hope and belief was that the power of God through healing would open peoples' hearts to hear about the healer—Jesus. The author was concerned due to the incredible bondage that people are under in Tanzania. It seemed that the power of the gospel in Tanzania was limited in some ways.

The author struggled to know how to proceed with mobilizing Tanzanians to reach their own unreached when there seemed to be some missing components in the gospel. Sharing the gospel message without power is difficult in the unreached areas. To simply leave one tradition for another is not appealing to the tribal or Islamic unreached people. There truly seemed to be the need for signs and wonders to follow and to confirm the message.

In the midst of this struggle, the author sensed that these signs and wonders were not just for physical healing. A new idea emerged to bring healing to the hearts and minds of people in the unreached people groups and not just healing to their physical bodies. God began to highlight over and over the need for wholeness and the biblical basis for bringing not just physical healing but healing of the heart and mind as well. This led to a pursuit of discovering and defining holistic healing with an evangelistic intent—holistic healing evangelism. This idea of expanding the evangelistic content and method is a new focus for the author's ministry in Tanzania.

Though the overall ministry vision includes all the unreached people groups, the doctoral project involves a specific tribe as the first target of holistic healing evangelism. This is the Sonjo tribe. They number around 32,000 with less than a few hundred believers. They are a tribal people living near the Serengeti Plain. They believe in one god and are fiercely loyal to him. Much evangelism in this area has been crusade style and house-to-house. One pastor commented that he has had eight people in his church for eight years. There are only a few pastors and they are tired yet tenacious. They have been beaten but they get up. They are expected to die for abandoning the tribal faith, but they live on. The people are watching and waiting.

It is in this area that the author believes power evangelism which heals not just the body, but also the heart and mind, will lead to a new ministry paradigm. The people need to see a power that is greater than all others. They need to know and see that the fear which torments the mind and the bitterness which plagues the heart can be cured. This is the goal of the holistic healing evangelism ministry model.

### Missiological Influences

As noted earlier the author's questions come from personal curiosity as to why Christianity has not reached the whole world yet as well as personal experience in remote regions actively taking the gospel to some of those remote unreached areas. This study and project are motivated by this personal journey. The search for answers has hovered over the central idea of *how* to spread the gospel in light of challenges. The answer has been a re-centering our evangelistic efforts on the holistic aspects of healing which must be proclaimed and demonstrated by those making the first impressions of the God of the Bible in new areas. The lack of the presence of holistic healing evangelism has also been identified. The obvious response would be to effect change in *how* we do evangelism which would require training, evaluation, and feedback. As mentioned in the Introduction this is a follow-up objective outside of the scope of this project.

This constraint allowed valuable attention to be given to the sociological aspects of missions, specifically the diffusion of a new idea, Christianity, into a different worldview. The plethora of intervening variables of cross-cultural ministry, missiological factors shaping research as well as missions led the author to review the influence of sociological aspects of missions and how this could shape the project implementation.



Kraft validates the sociological factors of our missions praxis. As a professor with practical missions experience, he knows the reality of cross-cultural issues in missions work. With the goal of evangelism empowered by the Holy Spirit, he is able to address this collision of power when we bring the Holy Spirit to regions where Satan has been ruling for centuries uncontested. In *Christianity and Culture*, he acknowledges the complexity of issues present in our efforts to bring empowered Christianity into a people group with a different worldview.<sup>237</sup> These worldview realities are prevalent in the author's context. This required the project to allow room for these considerations. Brown also echoes this motivation, "If we are to understand the global expansion of Christianity in particular, to grapple with the nature of global religions...we must begin to contextualize individual studies within a broader, cross-cultural, analytical framework."<sup>238</sup>

Additionally, Montgomery adds another compelling dimension for consideration in the research design. As a fellow missionary, Montgomery's journey coincides with the author's journey. As a missionary in Asia, he began to ask questions of our missions history, research, methods, and evaluation. His conclusion is that we are guilty of not prioritizing missions studies, especially the sociological factors. The result of his tension led to doctoral studies which formed the basis for several works<sup>239</sup> including, *Introduction to the Sociology of Missions*.<sup>240</sup> Montgomery affirms several of the author's

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<sup>237</sup> Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 2005), 286.

<sup>238</sup> Candy Gunther Brown, *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, 4.

<sup>239</sup> See other works on this by Montgomery including *The Diffusion of Religions: A Sociological Perspective* (1996) and *The Lopsided Spread of Christianity* (2002).

<sup>240</sup> Robert Montgomery, *Introduction to the Sociology of Missions* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1999).

desires regarding the project. First, his review of missions research highlights that the focus is on “sending as opposed to receiving of religions.”<sup>241</sup> This is a natural outflow of the association of “missions” with “sending.” Therefore to study missions presupposes the perspective of the sending side. In following Montgomery’s motivations, the author desires to provide a study which contributes to the research regarding the “receiving” side of missions. He clarifies the current need for this type of work: “Because of the large amount of material already available about the sending side of missions, one of the contributions to the sociology of missions can be to break new ground by providing new insights regarding the receiving side of missions.” The author’s project design and implementation will seek to do just that.

Second, he validates the author’s interest to discover what is causing the Sonjo people to convert to Christianity. Montgomery’s survey of the study of diffusion and its relation to missions overwhelmingly places “acceptance” (conversion) as the most intriguing variable under consideration.<sup>242</sup> The author will also consider this in the project design and implementation.

These sociological considerations validated the research goal of discovering how the gospel has been presented and perceived to date in the Sonjo tribe. Instead of proving a hypothesis, the research will be shaped more from this sociological perspective to gain insight and grounded theory which could then be formative in proposing theories thereafter.

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<sup>241</sup> Robert Montgomery, *Introduction to the Sociology of Missions* (Westport, Connecticut, Praeger Publishers, 1999), 2.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter provides details into how the project was designed and why these choices were made based on the research interest and the context. This begins with a review of the hypothesis addressing the problem followed by the details of the methodology. The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader ample understanding of what exactly was done in the field experience, how it was organized, and what factors impacted those decisions. Specific tools used in gathering data will be cited and included as appendices.

The discussion of the methodology will not elaborate on the history, nuances, and critique of quantitative versus qualitative research methods. Rather, this chapter will assume the reader has a comfortable knowledge of the research components thus the focus will be on what choices were made in the design and implementation of the project and why.

#### **Problem Statement**

Within the unreached areas where demonic powers are trusted and feared the evangelistic message must demonstrate a superseding power. Proclamation of who Jesus is without a demonstration of His power has handicapped our efforts of taking the good news to all peoples including the context group, the Sonjo tribe of Tanzania. Primary

hindrances of sickness, fear, and shame in the Sonjo people await a holistic gospel promising and providing a liberating power which trumps the powers that bind.

### **Hypothesis**

The hypothesis for this study will be applied within the context of a grounded theory approach, which is applicable for cases where the field of study is not saturated with data and theories.<sup>243</sup> This is true regarding studies on holistic healing evangelism among unreached African tribes. Rather than using the research to attempt to prove a priori assumptions about the benefit of holistic healing evangelism, the author has prioritized a more foundational research objective—to seek to explore and gain understanding of what is actually happening now among the Sonjo as they form impressions and questions regarding this new faith which has entered their culture. As Glaser, co-founder of the grounded theory method, explains, this is the objective of grounded theory—to gain understanding of the situation as it is, not to prove a theory.<sup>244</sup> Thus the goal of this study is to create space for an emergent theory to take shape through the research.

### **Grounded Theory**

With the grounded theory approach, the criteria for success is different as the goal is not to prove a theoretical assumption but rather to explore potential relationships and propose a basis for grounding an emerging theory. According to

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<sup>243</sup>Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*(Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishers, 2002), 125-131.

<sup>244</sup> Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory, Strategies for Qualitative Research*(New Brunswick: Aldine Transaction, 2012), 3.

Hutchinson's perspective for evaluating grounded theory research, a grounded theory "works if it explains major behavioral and interactional variations in the data."<sup>245</sup>

For this project, these criteria will be applied to the research done within the context of the Sonjo culture. This discussion will be in Chapter Six. It will include a discussion of the development of an emerging theory and how well it fits the Sonjo context, specifically the context of an unreached tribe adjusting to the diffusion of Christianity into their culture. Second, it will include a discussion of how the emerging theory helps to make sense of what is happening with the diffusion of Christianity among the Sonjo.

### **Research Design**

The core components formulating the research design include the following: the perspective of the researcher which shapes the whole design; the way in which data is collected and analyzed; and the specific tools used in that process. According to Creswell, these three—researcher's philosophy, strategies of inquiry, and specific methods—form the basic building blocks of a research project design.<sup>246</sup> These design considerations and decisions will be discussed below.

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<sup>245</sup> Sally A. Hutchinson, "Education and Grounded Theory," in *Qualitative Research in Education*, eds. Robert R. Sherman and Rodman M. Webb, (1998): 3, 128.

<sup>246</sup> John H. Creswell, *Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed methods*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishers, 2014), 5.

### Researcher's Philosophy

The author's work and context deals with cross-cultural realities on a regular basis. There is a daily reminder that the author's culture is different than the culture where she lives and work. More specifically within the ministry activities, the author is involved in taking the gospel to places where there is little to no access. The author is frequently mindful of the cultural divide between village tradition and western development. She is interested in how the tribal people make sense of new faiths, technology, and development, which are quickly coming their way after years of living simply with little disruption.

From a social science perspective, this is an interpretivist mindset. This is the notion that humans are impacted not just by their environment but by their "subjective perception of their environment—their subjective realities."<sup>247</sup> This view impacted the research design and the goal was to gain a greater understanding of how the context group makes sense of Christianity. Creswell uses the term "social constructivism" to describe this worldview. He states that the researcher's intent "is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world. Rather than starting with a theory (as in post-positivism), inquirers generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning."<sup>248</sup> This encouraged a design which allowed time in the context group for much interaction, dialogue, and observation. Creswell explains that the goal of this approach is "to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being

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<sup>247</sup> Jerry W. Willis, *Foundations of Qualitative Research: Interpretive and Critical Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishers, 2007), 6.

<sup>248</sup> Creswell, 8.

studied.”<sup>249</sup> The author’s ongoing work and goal for this project aligns well with this perspective.

### Strategies of Inquiry

The first main decision for the research design was to choose the most suitable approach: quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods.<sup>250</sup> This is not a simple matter of what the researcher prefers. Rather some constraints and guidelines assisted in this decision.<sup>251</sup> A glance at the researcher’s considerations highlights the consistent overlap of the project profile with the characteristics of a qualitative study which was the approach selected for the study.

First, the context of the unreached tribes in Tanzania is a field without an abundance of research. The nature of this project therefore lends itself to a qualitative approach since it is more of an exploratory project in a new area. The idea of holistic healing evangelism itself is not common, nor is the evaluation of different evangelistic methods in African unreached people groups. Even rarer are studies on how the gospel enters this type of context and to what extent holistic healing is evident and understood. Montgomery agrees with this void and encourages research of this type as a positive contribution to missiological studies.<sup>252</sup> This type of research topic is best served by

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Creswell, 17.

<sup>251</sup> Patton, 13.

<sup>252</sup> Montgomery, *Introduction to the Sociology of Missions*, 2.

discovering (qualitative) and gathering data to contribute to theory (grounded theory) as opposed to testing known theories with statistical results and projections (quantitative).<sup>253</sup>

Second, given the desire to engage this void, the goal of the project favored a qualitative nature lending itself towards more exploratory research which prioritizes contextualization and understanding (qualitative bent) over generalizability and prediction (quantitative bent).<sup>254</sup> Finally the profile of a qualitative researcher matches the author's position, practices, and preferences as one who is actively engaged within the context group (qualitative bent) versus an outside objective observer (quantitative bent).<sup>255</sup>

### Specific Qualitative Methods

According to an overview of qualitative methods,<sup>256</sup> one specific method of inquiry chosen was ethnographic research. Geertz uses the term "thick description" to describe the objective of ethnographic research. He states that the ethnographer is faced with "a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render."<sup>257</sup> The point is that ethnography is far from deciphering compartmentalized, prioritized, concrete realities.

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<sup>253</sup> Creswell, 51.

<sup>254</sup> Corrinne Glesne, *Becoming Qualitative Researchers* (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1992), 6.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>256</sup> Creswell, 12.

<sup>257</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1972), 10.



Rather it is validating and accepting the complexities of life with a goal of description rather than prescriptive predictions.

For this project, the complexity is even “thicker” because of the cross-cultural component as the researcher’s culture is very different from the context culture. However, it is beneficial that the researcher already operates with this ethnographic mindset in the ongoing ministry of evangelism in tribal people groups of Tanzania.

Another feature of ethnographic studies is that the researcher generally focuses on being in the “natural setting of the people over a prolonged period of time by collecting, primarily observational and interview data.”<sup>258</sup> As such, the ethnographic research involved spending time in the Sonjo tribe on multiple visits and experiencing daily life among the people. This iterative, evolving approach freed the researcher from a closed, bound plan which could not adapt to new realities once research was underway. Miles and Huberman describe this benefit: “The beauty of qualitative field research is that there is (nearly) always a second chance.”<sup>259</sup> With this ethnographic building block of a qualitative approach established, the researcher planned to spend significant time in the Sonjo tribe. As ethnographic research is an iterative, flexible, evolving process, intentional iterations of field work were built into the design process allowing the interrelationship of field work and research design to be realized.

A second specific qualitative method appropriate for this study was phenomenological research. This method addressed the topic of interest—the diffusion of Christianity—as a phenomenon in the context culture. In this case, the phenomenon was

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<sup>258</sup>Creswell, 242.

<sup>259</sup> Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishers, 1994), 25.

multi-faceted. First, there was the question of how the Sonjo culture has experienced the phenomenon of Christianity. A people with a fierce loyalty to their religion and their one god have now slowly been encountering a new religion. How has the culture experienced the diffusion of this new idea? Patton states that the phenomenological lens is looking at “the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon” for this group of people.<sup>260</sup> The ethnographic framework overlaid the phenomenological focus. As such, the field work, living with the people, and the iterative dynamic type of inquiry was directed towards the phenomenon of how the gospel has entered this unreached tribe. Their experience with the gospel phenomenon must leave an impression of the power of this new God. How does this power relate to their tribal god? Which god is greater? And, what are the implications of it all? These types of deeper experiences were explored as a part of the phenomenological angle.

Finally, the specific method of grounded theory drove the overall research engine. As stated above, the goal of this inquiry was not to validate theories or predict outcomes. Rather it was to explore while also having specific questions in mind. Questions regarding holistic healing evangelism however did not constrain the findings. The grounded theory rather asked, “What theory emerges from systematic comparative analysis and is grounded in fieldwork so as to explain what has been and is observed?”<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Patton, 132.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 133.

## Data Collection

Data collection was completed directly in the Sonjo area by the author. Her experience over several years in the Sonjo has opened the door to the church as well as the community. These existing personal relationships were the foundation for spending more devoted time in this area asking deeper questions of a broader audience. The author had a primary Sonjo contact who was the key for the success of the project. All research efforts were presented to him to ensure understanding, proper agreement, and clear approval for the project. The author had been in communication with this primary leader on the specific project from the beginning of this program and was confident that the project would progress well under his leadership.

Concerning ethical issues, the researcher decided that names of participants would not be published; use of audio recording would be done only with permission; and continual feedback from the primary leader would be required to ensure the perception of the project in the Sonjo area was not creating a problem for the primary leader or the community in general.

Due to the cross-cultural aspect of this work along with the target group being in a more undeveloped context, the nature of this type of research was even more delicate. In the Sonjo tribe, there is little western influence and little awareness of ethical implications of research. As such, the onus was entirely on the researcher to be proactive throughout the process as well as after the research to respect the Sonjo people and strive for an ultimate net positive impact of the project among the Sonjo tribe.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> See Jean McNiff and Jack Whitehead, *You and Your Action Research* (Routledge: New York, New York, 2010), 75-59, for a brief discussion of ethical principles.

Since the project involved evangelism in this unreached area, there were two primary groups involved. The first was the unbelievers who are hearing the evangelistic message. The second was the pastors and other believers who are sharing the message. The author was a participant seeking to gain understanding of the dynamics of the diffusion of Christianity on behalf of the Sonjo tribe.

### Data Sampling

Both groups of believers and unbelievers were sampled across a variety of variables. The participants included men and women, different age groups, people who have lived outside the Sonjo tribe and those who have never lived outside the area, people from a six different villages, as well as new believers and believers who have been saved several years. Each of these variables contributed to expanding the breadth and depth of data collection. One variable which remained constant was that all participants had some connection with the primary pastor. As the whole project was under his oversight, he was the one collecting the participants. However, he was given the guidelines for the sampling methods listed above to use in selecting the participants.

### Triangulation

A key for the qualitative research model was to find ways to strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings. The traditional approaches to reliability and validity in quantitative studies do not carry over to data sources such as personal interviews, surveys, and other more subjective inputs of qualitative data.<sup>263</sup> Rather in qualitative

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<sup>263</sup> Creswell, 203.

studies, the terms are redefined to fit the research model. Common terms applied to qualitative research are trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility.<sup>264</sup> The researcher is required to explain why the conclusions are not simply over-reaching, stemming from personal bias, or all-together fabricated. Since numbers and statistics are not the point, the real question is trustworthiness of the findings.

One primary way the researcher dealt with this was through the use of triangulation, which generally refers to incorporating more than one input for any given aspect of the research cycle. There are multiple benefits of data triangulation including the convergence of data which strengthens the findings and the complementary nature of different data sources which deepens understanding. This overlap further develops the findings beyond what one source alone could provide.<sup>265</sup> For this project the following types of triangulation were used: data, methodological, and analyst.

The data triangulation for this project involved different sources of data including Sonjo believers and unbelievers. Additionally, methodological triangulation was incorporated. This involved different methods of data collections including interviews with both unbelievers and believers, photography, and field notes. Berg emphasizes that “the important feature of triangulation is not the simple combination of different kinds of data but the attempt to relate them so as to counteract the threats to validity identified in each.”<sup>266</sup> Lastly analyst triangulation was used to provide outside views of the data for comparative analysis. One analyst had a background in business. The other analyst was a

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>265</sup> Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, *The Practice of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishers, 2006), 318-19.

<sup>266</sup> Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 2001), 5.

teacher with a community development background. Both live in Tanzania as missionaries and work in village settings.

### **Instrumentation**

With this approach, the research implementation was built upon a grounded theory research goal. The goal of the research was to discover the factors impacting favorable receptivity towards Christianity among the Sonjo tribe in Tanzania. The factors impacting favorable receptivity towards Christianity were defined as perceptions of Christianity, risks and benefits in adopting Christianity, and factors causing people to shift from the traditional religion to embrace Christianity.

In light of this goal, the primary research questions were: 1) What are the positive and negative perceptions of Christianity among the Sonjo? and 2) What contributing factors are operating among those who are transitioning from practicing their traditional religion to practicing Christianity?

From this foundation the specific data instruments were developed. There were three specific tools used with the three data sources. First in the fields notes, a questionnaire was used with a focus group. It asked six basic questions of believers about their experience with healing, deliverance, and salvation (see Appendix A).

A second tool was used as a guide during the interviews which included both believers and unbelievers. The opening questions affirmed the Sonjo culture and people. The objective was to gain trust to allow the participant to share freely. The balance of the questions sought to gain an understanding of what was shaping their perception of Christianity, specifically what does it mean “to be saved?” In addition, questions about

their experience with Christians, the gospel, benefits, and risks were covered. The closing questions allowed the participant to ask the researcher questions to build relationship and trust. The interview guide for the believers and unbelievers was slightly different. This was due to the sensitivity of questions regarding religion for those who follow the traditional Sonjo religion (see Appendix B and C for both interview guides).

The final instrument used was photography. Participants were asked a similar question as the interview but instead of answering with discussion, they were asked to take a photograph capturing the answer. They were asked to take photographs of three areas: benefits of Christianity, risks of Christianity, and factors causing people to come closer to Christianity (see Appendix D for the photography guide).

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FIELD EXPERIENCE**

The journey now begins to the Sonjo people. As this project is born out of four years of personal experience in this tribe, I have naturally aligned my field work with an ethnographic approach. With that in mind, I will take the liberty to write from the perspective of my personal role in this research process expressing the story with first person.

The reader will travel with me through the Serengeti Plain to reach the Sonjo people. We will walk through the evolution of the design and appreciate a snap shot of Sonjo life along the way represented by thirty interviews, twenty-five photographs, and several focus groups across three separate field trips covering a six-month period. I will share the details of how I interacted with the people, how I approached the analysis, and finally what I deemed most relevant through my interpretation of over 200 pages of data collected. The findings presented will be intermingled with narrative analysis followed by a summary of outcomes at the end of the chapter.

#### **Data Analysis Objectives**

One objective was to utilize a large data set. One reason for this is the cross-cultural factor. Sometimes communication can get lost, interpreters can make mistakes, and concepts may not translate well. For instance I had to discuss the idea of “holistic



healing” with several Tanzanian nationals to get a working term for this in Swahili. A second reason for using a large data set was to counteract general confusion in regular communication. This is what I call the “street fallout” of witchcraft. I experience it often in normal daily activities. I saw some of this in the interviews, which made me strive to have larger samples to compensate for anomalies and confusion related to language and/or witchcraft. For example, one girl repeatedly said she had never heard of salvation and then a few minutes later she said she hears a lot of people talking about salvation.

A third reason for the large data set was to strengthen the reliability of the study. Another researcher could take the same instruments and ask twenty believers and ten unbelievers the same questions using a similar sampling method and I expect the study should yield similar patterns in the raw data. Yet the interpretation of that data would be quite subjective. I purposed to make small leaps in the interpretation rather than making awkward leaps with relationships and meaning. My goal was to stay close to the data.

Another objective of the analysis was to have clear steps and procedures which could be explained and repeated. The qualitative analysis field is still developing and thus it suffers from the critique that many reports do not give adequate feedback on how the data was collected and how it was analyzed. Thus the resulting conclusions are difficult to appreciate let alone trust for the reader.<sup>267</sup> For this reason, this chapter will provide detail into how the data was collected. This will be followed by a discussion of what steps were taken to analyze the data. This will create the context for the reader to evaluate the conclusions. It will also foster confidence in the overall analysis and outcomes.

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<sup>267</sup>Miles and Huberman, 281.

### **Analysis Process**

The process will be explained to give the reader insight into how the 200 pages was managed during the data analysis. The steps described were applied to the whole set of raw data. I began with the standard coding technique, reading the notes over and over to observe the patterns. I marked the codes by hand in the margin. Naturally, the code book kept growing and growing. From the codes, I was able to begin clustering repeated ideas into categories. My approach for coding was in the middle of the spectrum—not too high level and not too detailed. It was enough to get a big picture view of what was being repeated with nuances. The detail also provided a way not to overlook minor scenarios.

One example of the coding is “obstacles to Christianity.” A cursory look reveals fear of all kinds as the main obstacle. However, one obstacle which was only mentioned once was, “worshiping with children is a barrier.” The Sonjo people see Christian adults worshipping and singing together with children. In their culture it is shameful for adults to mix with children in this way. One new believer was explaining the difference in his life after Christ. He said, “I play with my kids and I even share a soda with them.” He stated that other adults have no concept of this type of behavior. This one example shows the reasoning for coding every obstacle separately and allowing groups of obstacles to emerge through review. Making a specific code for every obstacle allowed this breadth of insight.

After the preliminary coding, followed by much rereading and layering of the codes, the next step was to look specifically at the primary research questions. The first primary question was: “What are the positive and negative perceptions of Christianity among the Sonjo?” The second question was: “What contributing factors are operating

among those who are transitioning from their traditional religion to practicing Christianity?” The next step was to take a specific look at Sonjo perceptions of what it means “to be saved.” Lastly the photography feedback was added to the discussion. As noted, this research used a grounded theory approach. This means that the data presented in this chapter is meeting the research goal of exploring what is happening in the Sonjo and how to make sense of it.

### **Preliminary Field Work**

My first trip for the project began in January 2013. I boarded my Toyota Land Cruiser Hard Top and headed out for the two-day journey much of which was off-road terrain. This was my first time being my own driver. Along the way, God’s beautiful creation, pure and undeveloped, was the backdrop. One breathtaking view was of Lake Natron which hosts the pink flamingoes and their only breeding place in the world. We drove for hours around Ole Doi Nyongai (Maasai for “the mountain of God”), an active volcanic mountain. At various times, we were greeted by ostrich, impala, zebra, giraffe, wildebeest, and elephants.

To my great benefit, I was assisted by a fellow missionary serving as a colleague on my first exploration. My colleague happened to board the vehicle with her Ph.D. in communications as well as thirty years of missionary service, much of which was also in unreached tribes. She was the person who invited me to come to Tanzania originally and she had already visited the Sonjo with me in 2010. When we arrived in Yasimdito village, they celebrated my vehicle, which they had prayed for, my driving, and my colleague whom they were delighted to see again.

We began as every trip to the village begins: greeting the people, taking chai, and eating ugali (boiled white corn meal) and green vegetable. The next day we shared with the main pastor who served as the gate keeper. This main pastor is a bishop with the Tanzanian Assembly of God and has a wide sphere of influence and authority. He is highly respected and trusted by the Sonjo people, believers and unbelievers alike. I explained the goal, motivation, and hopes for the next two weeks regarding the project. I then reviewed the ethical constraints.

As I considered the ethical factors, it was not difficult for me to lean towards a very conservative position. I shared with the key pastor that this research will not include the names of participants, nor will it attempt to expose or disrespect Sonjo culture which, as far as tribal cultures go, exhibits a fierce loyalty to the traditions. Finally, I pointed towards the expectation that this project will ultimately serve the Sonjo pastors with feedback to shape a more informed and effective evangelism. He was sold from the start. Thus he opened the doors wide and we began.

The goal for this trip was to explore the research method with broad questions which later work down to more specific interests. Because the research was the natural outgrowth of my time in the Sonjo, observations over time led to the identification of fear and unforgiveness as key obstacles to faith in the unreached areas. Based on this, two initial broad questions for this first trip were: 1) What fears do Sonjo people have regarding Christianity? and 2) What situations seem the most difficult to forgive for Sonjo people?

This was the springboard to many spontaneous conversations as I shared normal life with the Sonjo people, dialogued continuously with the key pastor, and also sat with

two groups for a more focused discussion. One group was lay people both men and women. The second group was only pastors. Much time was spent with the key pastor throughout the two weeks sharing with him what I was learning, asking for clarification and validation of other conversations, as well as seeking his wisdom on how to carry on the discussions due to the sensitive nature of addressing beliefs and religion among the Sonjo people.

One example is when we were reviewing at the end of one evening. He said, “Gina we made a mistake today.” I said, “Pastor I am sorry. What did we do?” He said, “When we were in the village chairman’s office, your young interpreter mentioned the name of the Sonjo god. But I quickly stepped in and tried to cover over that.” I was shocked and did not recall the situation which means the pastor did a good job of covering. I was reminded that among traditional Sonjo, you are not allowed to speak the name of their god. Needless to say, this type of ongoing oversight was non-negotiable especially since my discussions centered on religion. Fortunately due to the years of doing ministry together, I have a good relationship with the pastor and we were free to address things of this nature.

Another lesson was learned quickly. As I explored the issue of fear with the key pastor, the evidence was overwhelming that fear was controlling people and was one of the main obstacles to Christianity. My other primary question regarding issues of unforgiveness was not as easy to unpack. Whereas the fears were simple to name and explain, the heart issues of forgiveness were not as forthcoming. I shifted on the spot to drop that topic from the research objective and spent the balance of the time focusing on fears and how fears relate to perceptions of Christianity. I was quickly witnessing the

iterative nature of qualitative ethnographic and phenomenological studies. As Creswell notes, the nature of this approach unfolds through an iterative cycle of immersion in the culture, research, reflection, and recalibration.<sup>268</sup> This cycle naturally began during my first trip to the Sonjo.

### Revised Goal and Research Questions

As Creswell notes, the preliminary research opens whole new avenues of interest and these are woven into the process which is allowed and encouraged with ethnographic and phenomenological studies.<sup>269</sup> As such, the research goal and primary questions evolved through reflection after the first field trip. The subsequent research was aimed at following up on the initial analysis using an interview guide for one-on-one discussions.

Even though religion is essentially a taboo topic among the Sonjo, I sensed through the main pastor's influence that I would also be able to interview unbelievers. We discussed the issues and dangers and agreed that if I were careful, it could work. Through several iterations the pastor and his wife and others gave feedback on the questions, participating in the design of the interview guide. The two guides were slightly different due the sensitivities of discussing Sonjo religion with traditional Sonjo who still follow Sonjo religion (see Appendix B and C). For them it is not acceptable to discuss their god and what goes on at the ceremonies. The whole religion is secretive. For this reason the guide for the traditional Sonjo was slightly more general. However, Christians are unafraid to speak of the religion so the interview took advantage of their openness to

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<sup>268</sup> Creswell, 205-206.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 186.

learn more about why the religion has so much power over the people. The interview guide will be explained briefly.

First of all both guides opened with questions about the Sonjo culture such as their strengths and talents, as well as what the participant likes about the Sonjo culture. Next were questions on how they learned about Christianity and what it means “to be saved.” Both groups were asked about the benefits and risks of Christianity. The distinctions for the believers were that they were questioned about the Sonjo god as well as on what unbelievers ask them and what they see as the biggest obstacles to the Sonjo accepting Christianity. The traditional Sonjo guide explored exposure to other faiths and concepts of life after death. Both guides closed with the participant asking me about America, white people, the Bible, or Christianity. This was primarily of relational value to allow the interview to end with a more personal feel and to also allow them to have some ownership in the discussion.

Another factor influencing the design in this reflection period was the consideration of photography as a data source. I had not seen this as viable or logistically manageable. However, two colleagues had published a qualitative study incorporating photography from villages in Tanzania.<sup>270</sup> It was inspiring and convincing. I knew I had to try it. This led to a new component in the research design. I took a few questions from the interview guide, restated them to ask participants to take photographs which explain their answer rather than just having a dialogue. The photography guide was the same for both believers and unbelievers. They were asked to take photos that reflect three ideas: 1)

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<sup>270</sup>Benson P. Fraser, William J. Brown., Corey Wright, and Steven L. Kiruswa, “Facilitating Dialog About Development Through Digital Photography: Seeing Through the Eyes of Maasai Women,” *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 2012, 5:1, 20-42.

a positive impact of Christianity among the Sonjo; 2) a negative impact of Christianity among the Sonjo; and 3) things that are attracting the Sonjo to Christianity. (See Appendix D). I asked for cameras to be donated and prepared for the next trip.

### Successive Field Trips

I eagerly returned to the Sonjo in March with another fellow missionary, a young interpreter, and cameras in tow. This was a testing time for the interview guide and the photography as well as delving into religious topics with traditional Sonjo who are extremely resistant to this type of dialogue. In short, the trip was a huge success. We spoke with eight participants, five believers and three unbelievers. Two participants did a great job taking photographs. I returned in July to finish the interviews. My goal was to have thirty participants. I managed to reach that goal with a total of ten unbelievers and twenty believers participating.

The photography, though it worked, did have logistical challenges. One of which is that, if you hand out cameras in an African village, there is a good chance the camera will not be returned. I was quite curious to see if the first cameras handed out would disappear. In every case, the cameras were returned. Also, the process proved that the participants understood the questions. Their photos were insightful and impressive. Maybe more importantly they had a great time and took many more photos as I told them just to enjoy the cameras and have fun. In the end, five participants submitted photographs, two unbelievers and three believers. Though I encouraged them to take many photos, which they did, I narrowed down the number for which they would give



explanations. The result was twenty-five photographs which were included in the data analysis.

### Extensive Raw Data

At the end of the study, I had three sets of data. First, the field notes from the exploratory trip in January which included some direct transcriptions as well as my field notes from conversations. This trip included two focus groups. One group was comprised of eight believers, four women and three men. These meeting notes were transcribed by my research colleague who captured the discussion on the computer. The same applies to the second focus group which was comprised of pastors and leaders only, six men and one woman. In addition to these groups, I also discussed many things with the main pastor as well as a handful of other individuals. The January research resulted in twenty pages of notes. Some of the questions during this first field trip discussed obstacles to Christianity, how they do evangelism, the results of their evangelism, what questions people ask about Christianity, and stories of conversion experiences.

The interviews with the thirty Sonjo participants served as the second set of data. An audio recorder as well as a translator was used for the interviews. I transcribed the English translation of the audio into notes which resulted in 178 pages of notes. Finally, there was the photography with explanations from the Sonjo participants which was seventeen pages. Overall the raw data amounted to 216 pages.

## Findings

### Initial Analysis of Findings from the First Field Trip

On the first trip, I entered the research field with my best efforts to have an open mind, subdue my predispositions, manage my bias, and find the “real truth.” In honor of the qualitative process, I assured my colleague I am not trying to prove anything. I justified why I did not have more detailed questions and that I was ready to let the initial conversations speak into the design of my research as we progressed. This is indeed what happened. Though I was prepared to throw my whole idea to the wind and regroup at the end of this initial trip, something quite different happened. To my surprise, my very first question with the main pastor seemed to hook an anchor to the primary motivation for the project. When I asked him what were the main reasons people were not open to Christ, his answer was immediate: “They think believers are liars. They are afraid they will get a curse and die. They are afraid they will be poor.” The obvious question is: “Why do they believe these things?”

This was the beginning of a seed planted into the participatory research design by the main pastor. As Patton emphasizes, my goal was not to come as an outsider and act like I know what I am doing,<sup>271</sup> but rather to propose general ideas, and then work with the people to mold those into pertinent and safe topics of conversation which I would flesh out before the next visit. With this objective in mind, I told the pastor that it would be ideal for the Sonjo people also to speak into the project. This began happening quickly.

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<sup>271</sup> Patton, 84-49.

The benefit of this first trip was getting a big picture view across different sources. By focusing on people's fears, I simultaneously discovered their needs. The primary needs identified among the Sonjo which encounter a conflict with Christianity were as follow: work, money, children, community, and justice. The way they meet all of these needs now is through their strict rules and regulations of their religion and culture, tribal laws regarding justice, and witchcraft. This is shown below in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1. Primary Needs Identified in Sonjo Discussions**

<b>Primary Need</b>	<b>How that need is met</b>
Work	Farming and livestock
Money	Work, witchcraft, making alcohol
Children	Religious rituals
Community	Religious rituals
Justice	Tribal wars and defense

One of the most frequent comments was that Sonjo people fear becoming poor if they become a Christian. The reasons were that they see Christians going to church every day and not doing their normal activities so they must not be making money. They see them giving offerings to a pastor, which appears to be a business transaction, so they must be losing their money to help another person gain wealth. This is confusing as indicated by one person's explanation that "if they see someone becoming rich, they will go to the witchdoctor to curse that person so that they will lose those riches." So the idea of freely, generously, and intentionally blessing another person is outside of the norm, to say the least. Finally, Christians are not able to utilize witchcraft, which is another primary source of blessing and riches according to their belief.

An equally relevant concern was the loss of community once becoming a Christian. The social life is based on following the religious traditions which are

primarily practices of worshipping a false god. Christians cannot participate in these practices, therefore Christianity brings a huge divide into the culture. It may be fair to say that Africans live for social acceptance and community. Suggesting a deviation which makes people segregate you from society is nearly impossible.

The other primary concerns mentioned were the desire and responsibility to see your kids blessed. Again, the way children are blessed is through religious rituals. It is required for children to pass through these rituals including female genital mutilation (FGM). Otherwise, they believe young girls will not be able to marry or have children. Men will be utterly rejected by their age mates which, in effect, is to deny manhood if they do not follow the traditions. Age mates reflect one of the ways in which the tribal cultures are organized. There are different age groups for both men and women. A person progresses through life with his or her age group. They participate in rites of passage as a group. The age group or age mates form a group identity. The bonds are strict.

Lastly, the tribal culture includes vengeance, restitution, and justice. This can include killing if necessary. The Sonjo people have observed that Christians are forgiving and merciful so they fear the system for justice will fail and they will be left unprotected if they become Christians. The idea of taking justice into their own hands will not be available to them. They do not see the government as a source of justice so they sense that Christianity will strip them of the access to justice, and justice is required for a society to work. Table 5.2, summarizes how their perception of Christianity conflicts with these vital needs.

**Table 5.2. Obstacles of Christianity to the Primary Sonjo Needs**

<b>Primary Need</b>	<b>How that need is met</b>	<b>Problem with Christianity</b>
Work	Farming, livestock	Time at church is time away from work.
Money	Work, Witchcraft, making alcohol	Offerings decrease your income. Church time decreases time for working for an income. Christians cannot use witchcraft which is viewed as the primary source of blessing. Making alcohol is a common source of income and not allowed as a Christian therefore this will decrease income.
Children	Religious rituals	Christians cannot support worship of the false god so children will suffer and parents will be cursed.
Community	Religious rituals	Social acceptance demands adherence to the religious rituals. Christians who do not participate are segregated, despised, and cursed.
Justice	Tribal wars and defense	Christians show mercy, and forgiveness and will not use violence for defense therefore accepting Christianity imposes a loss of justice.

### Reflection

As the Sonjo consider these perceived insurmountable obstacles to Christianity, it forces them to grapple with how any Sonjo person could ever decide to abandon the religious culture and decide to follow Jesus. One believer stated that the Sonjo people think that “a true Christian, a true born again is a crazy person.” The normal Sonjo life is bound by the religious rules. They fear the consequences of breaking the rules, which include poverty, shame, segregation, and death. Therefore, it is perplexing to them how people manage to break the rules. It is causing the people to think and ask questions.

When I asked believers what questions the Sonjo people ask them, one lady replied, “The people are asking, ‘Can I be saved?’” They really do not even know if Christianity is an option for all people. Others simply state, “Christianity is not for

everyone....that other God, that Christian God is not for us. It is just for western culture. We have our own culture.” These two views reflect an initial response to the new religion. On one hand, people are curious and wonder how Sonjo people can accept a new religion. On the other hand, people are stubborn and reject Christianity outright as an outside belief which has no place in the Sonjo culture.

Both sides believe their current religion works. They have one god, called Hambegeo. When I asked, “Does Hambegeo have power?,” they answered, “They believe Hambegeo is powerful. When they pray for rain, he brings rain. When they pray for a woman to have a baby, Hambegeo gives her a baby. So they see Hambegeo does have power like Jesus.” I asked them what happens if Hambegeo seems to fail to deliver. They have a way around that problem by blaming themselves in which case they must seek Hambegeo again on where they may have failed to follow the rules. The resolution is just to try harder and maybe next time Hambegeo will answer.

Ultimately the curiosity as well as the stubbornness is about power. Curiosity asks, “Could there be another power?” It opens the door for more investigation. Stubbornness retracts in fear not wanting even to consider. Ultimately a greater power would mean the loss of power. One participant directly summarized the resistance as a power struggle. Regarding the traditional leaders, he said, “The benefit they gain and the power they have, they will lose because nobody will be recognizing them. At the end of the day if the community joins Christianity, they lose their power.”

So the inevitable question becomes: Which god is more powerful? They are asking that question. The believers have their own answer, however, the unbelievers are still waiting and watching. One believer stated, “Up to today...Hambegeo is like Pharaoh

and Moses...people need to be trained that Hambegeo power is evil power (like Pharaoh) because Hambegeo can only do small things...but God's power is like Moses—the real power which is greater.”

This is the context of this project, a tribe with less than two percent adherents to Christianity, where the initial diffusion of Christianity has begun and Christianity is not going away. One person said the people are even thinking, “What are they going to do about Christians?” This reality—Christianity is here to stay—is forcing another question: “What is the benefit of Christianity?”

This curiosity and an interest in their perception became a pattern in this first phase of the project. I began to question not just what their fears are, but even more foundational—what is their perception of Christianity and how is it being formed? Do they see a God of power or do they just see one god being exchanged for another with many negative impacts on the fabric of society? Is there anything attractive to them in the community of believers? I wondered what kind of “Christianity” they are observing. One example is cited from a discussion of the obstacles to Christianity. A believer commented, “The thing which causes them to stumble is the parents want to send their kids to Hambegeo...once children are grown, then it will be ok to become a Christian but not before...after they finish their local culture, then they can become Christian.” This type of comment is common and reveals a distorted view of being a “Christian.” Others cared only about continuing with Hambegeo and church did not matter as long as the traditions were followed. This again shows a lack of understanding that Christianity and the Sonjo religion are mutually exclusive.

### Detailed Analysis

The detailed analysis section builds upon and expands the findings. It represents the complete analysis which incorporates all the data from each trip: field notes, interviews, and photography. During the coding process, patterns quickly appeared indicating the primary words and thoughts being conveyed. Another step alongside coding was a quick assessment of words counts for the primary ideas. These ideas were then grouped into categories. As coding continued, the word count assessment also grew. Eventually the words were clustered into categories. The total word count of each category was sorted showing the top primary repeated words to be power, fear, shame, and money. This is shown below in Table 5.3.

**Table 5.3**  
Repetitive Words and Concepts in the Raw Data

<b>Category</b>	<b>Occurrences</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Power	186	15%
Fear	144	12%
Shame	144	12%
Money	138	11%
Control	126	10%
Evil	107	9%
Curse	101	8%
Deception	69	6%
Peace	69	6%
Freedom	61	5%
Respect	38	3%
Sin	23	2%
True God	20	2%

This aligns with the previous comments regarding the power struggle. It is apparent in the discussions people have regarding religion. One person commented that people are not interested in Christianity necessarily “except they want to ask you about



your God in relation to their god.” A new believer commented on his surprise to find a power operating in him helping him overcome persecution. He shared, “I was so shocked that I found out that I had power that was not normal. I had power to refuse all that and no fear.” He said that others were surprised and asked, “How were you able to cross to another place and be there? How?” They wondered how he could stand as a Christian. He said he realized they also have a power operating, saying, “It gives him a certain imagination that even though they can see good things, there is a certain power that is holding them back.” As with all false religions, much of the power comes from secrecy and vows. This is also the case with the Sonjo religion and helps explain why the power issue is front and center of the discussion. One man said they are afraid “because they have made those vows and because of the worship that they do. They are scared of it.”

This table also sets the stage for two predominant themes throughout the findings: shame and fear. First, unbelievers dread the shame associated with Christianity due to segregation from society. In the Sonjo, community works in large part through the pagan practices. Christians naturally withdraw from worshipping what they see as a false god. As a result, Christians are seen as deserters. They abandon their age mates. They go missing during cultural events. This disrupts the flow of society. This is not acceptable. Ultimately a Christian is considered shameful for these actions. The power of shame in the culture is quite intense. The resistance to this shame has proven to be one of the main obstacles observed in this research.

The second main obstacle for unbelievers is fear. There are fears of all kinds regarding Christianity but the main two are the fear of being poor and the fear of a curse and even death if they become a Christian. Even if these fears are overcome, then

comes the fear of the children not being blessed since the Sonjo religion requires children to pass through the rituals if they are to marry, be respected, and have children. One man shared that as a father this was his biggest challenge. It took him three years to think about it before deciding. Though he liked Christianity, he knew as the father it was his job to take his children to the god. He knew he could not do this if he was saved. His story also captures the impact of shame. He shared his struggle,

I was afraid for my boys who were not saved at that time . . . I was afraid that if I get saved there is no way I can take my boys to follow that tradition. Now I was thinking if I need my boys to first follow that tradition, then I was thinking if I get saved, then we all get saved. So those were the things that were holding me back. I am the one who is supposed to take them to the traditions but if I get saved, I cannot take them. So I was asking myself, what will my sons do? Because I know they will be segregated by other people . . . they are highly despised by their fellows because they have not gone through those traditions. So that was disturbing my mind so much. So let's see, for a girl, a Sonjo woman should pass through FGM and if you are saved you cannot do that thing. If you are not doing FGM, then she will not be married by a Sonjo and she will be highly despised. You see. So it was hard to me.

Another young man shared about his journey to salvation. He learned that an uncle had gotten saved. I asked him what he learned from that uncle. He said,

What I learned from that person, he was a thief but once he was saved, he was totally changed. I asked him, 'Why have you decided to be saved?' The man told me that he got the real God, the true living God. So I just left him because I was still a young warrior. When you hear anything about god, you are afraid you are going to die because you have heard something about god.

The key issues seen here will be found throughout the discussion. As seen above, there is fear even to speak of their god or religion. There is intense struggle when considering the ramifications of Christianity. Ultimately they feel the heat of the power struggle. These primary themes will be seen throughout the following sections.

*Positive and Negative Perceptions of Christianity*

The first primary research question was, “What are the position and negative perceptions of Christianity among the Sonjo?” This gives insight into “what gospel” they are receiving. As Christianity has slowly begun to enter the culture, different voices and representations are all contributing to this new idea called “Christianity.” Before telling them what gospel they needed I wanted to find out what gospel they currently have.

Table 5.4 below shows the most common themes in the answers believers gave regarding their experience and positive perception of Christianity. There were twenty believers in the study. The percentage shows what percent of the twenty participants included this topic in their discussion of the benefits of Christianity.

**Table 5.4**  
Positive Perceptions of the Benefits of Christianity among Sonjo Believers

Category	Occurrences	Percentage
Personal change	11	28%
Peace	8	21%
Power	7	18%
Protection	7	18%
Belief and Results in Prayer	6	15%

Conversion often coincided with a personal crisis or need. Many told of demons leaving without anyone praying for them. They discovered that spirits had been controlling them. Once free, they sensed change in their heart. They were able to forgive, not engage in bad behaviors, leave alcohol, and love people. Many testified to these changes which created the perception that positive personal change is the most recognized effect of becoming a Christian. One man nearly laughed when he tried to explain all the changes Christianity brought to his life and family. He shared,

The issue of fighting...I saw after getting saved that it is very bad. It is very bad. Now you see after I have gotten saved, I know how to differentiate the two. That's why I have taken a step to reconcile them and bring them together. Despite the fact that I am not the leader. I have no leadership, I am not the chairman here. Though I feel very bad and people know it. So that is one of the profits of being saved. I have been separated from the sins. My children have not gone to traditions. My daughter is not going through FGM. My business is doing very well. I had no car. I only had this house here though I had not finished. I got saved. I bought a car. I built a guest house. My kids are studying in English medium which I highly pay for them. I have two cars. So I really thank God. Completely. Completely.

One person commented that everyone sees the change in Christians, "Yes, they see changes in Christians. After observing the Christian lifestyle, it will really attract them and influence them to follow Christ." Once they begin to see changes in Christians, it highlights what is missing in their culture. Another comment illustrated how Christianity reveals the gap in Sonjo culture, "People who are saved...what I am thinking....Christians need to have love. Because most of the people in this world have no love." So Christians are delivered from bondage. They live with freedom. Their character and behavior changes. They enjoy divine protection and have great confidence in receiving answers to their prayers. The other Sonjo people are observing all of these changes. They realize something has been missing from their culture.

On the flip side, I considered the negative perception of Christianity among unbelievers. Patterns in the negative perception show that the dominant view is that Christianity involves loss in many ways including loss of community, financial loss, loss of justice, loss of power, loss of health and even life. One man felt the ultimate loss as his father disowned him, "My father told me from now on you're not my child. You have decided to be saved. You left your father's religion. I do not want to see you." Another tangible loss they perceive is seen in this comment, "They say that once I become

aChristian I will take all my properties and my things to the pastor. I will just become more poor.”

Table 5.5 below shows the negative perceptions represented summarized by three main categories. The percentage indicates what percentage of the comments included this topic regarding negative perceptions.

This reflects believers speaking for unbelievers. This is because believers did not have a negative perception, and unbelievers would not share their honest negative perception. Only in a few cases did this happen. Therefore the table shows the perceptions of unbelievers through the eyes of believers. Believers do in fact have much dialogue about Christianity with unbelievers because the traditional Sonjo realize Christianity is increasing and they are asking more and more questions. This data reflects these conversations.

**Table 5.5**  
References to Negative Perceptions of Christianity Among the Sonjo Unbelievers

Category	Occurrences	Percentage
Christianity results in loss	34	54%
Rejection due to conflict with culture and religion	18	29%
Poor gospel representation	11	17%

This high-level view shows how many of the perceptions represent loss. It also shows the impact of damage done by early Christianity which entered first through the Catholic Church and the Lutheran church. In the Sonjo, the unanimous opinion of believers and unbelievers was that these churches were and are fully syncretistic. It has created much confusion. One unbeliever stated of the Lutheran church, “When I observe it, it makes me stop going to church completely.” Another stated of the Catholic priest

who was a family member, “When I looked at the life of my young brother, he is just a Father (priest) but he is very dirty. Very dirty. Very bad behavior. Very bad.”

On top of that, they see that there is no need for Christianity since the Sonjo have their own god, their own religion, and religious rules which suit them. As a result, Christianity offends the culture thus, it must be rejected. Also, some of the negative perceptions showed a general lack of knowledge about Christianity. Unbelievers commented, “If they worship Jesus—one God, why so many churches? They call themselves Christians, why do not they unite and be one thing?”

#### *Factors contributing toward receptivity of the Gospel*

The second primary research question was, “What contributing factors are operating among those who are transitioning from their traditional religion to practicing Christianity?” To get a broad picture of the influencing factors, I looked at all the descriptions of conversion experiences as well as discussions of what is attracting traditional Sonjo people to Christianity. Table 5.6 deals with the conversion factors of Sonjo people who are already believers. It shows the number of times each factor was mentioned in the discussion of their conversion experiences.

**Table 5.6**  
Influencing factors in the conversion of Sonjo believers

Influencing factor	Occurrences	Percentage
Witnessing	15	25%
Preaching	11	18%
Reflection and questions	11	18%
Sovereignty of God	11	18%
Outside exposure	6	10%
Power	6	10%

Witnessing and preaching were clearly a pattern. People went to crusades and heard preaching on the radio. Many referred to the pastor and others visiting with them and witnessing about God. It makes sense that these were primary contributors. What was more surprising was that the Sonjo people spoke a lot about analyzing Christianity. They thought a lot about whether there could possibly be another “true God,” and if so, how they could leave their god, what would happen to their children, and how could they survive without witchcraft? There were many references to conversations which moved them along their journey as they shared their struggles and listened to answers.

Another surprise involved the references to the sovereignty of God. I was struck by the number of references to what appeared to be sovereign acts of God often unrelated to other events. People heard voices. They had dreams. They were awoken and delivered from demons. There was divine protection. One man had decided he had lost it all after an argument with his wife where he actually was infuriated and attempted to swing his machete over the back of her neck as she was leaning over. Another man stopped him. She ran. He fought with the man. His story is intriguing,

So then I left and went home and I thought, ‘Now my wife has already left me and maybe she has even killed herself with hanging and I have beaten my mother. I am living, why? What’s the reason that makes me live?’ And I opened the rope made by the skin and I said, ‘I will hang myself.’ When I held that rope in my hands, the sleep took me and I woke up early in the morning.

When I woke up from the sleep and I heard the voice, ‘If you do not get saved, you will die.’ Over and over I heard it. When I tried to take it away and not think of it, it comes again. When I tried to be quiet, the louder it comes. I thought, ‘What is this?’ So I went and took my wife’s Bible and started to read hoping that it would stop that voice. And I saw that the place we were having problems was because of so many people around so I went to the farm where no one would disturb me and when I went there, the voice increased.

This was the most dramatic story I heard. But there were many fascinating stories which could not be explained apart from God’s timely and powerful intervention. The conversion experiences showed that as Christianity has entered the Sonjo, it is clear that God has sovereignly revealed Himself.

The other side of this question considered what factors are attracting unbelievers to Christianity. The results are quite different. Table 5.7 shows the number of times each factor was mentioned as a contributing factor leading Sonjo people from their tribal religion closer to Christianity.

**Table 5-7**  
Factors attracting traditional Sonjo people to Christianity

Influencing factor	Occurrences	Percentage
Witnessing the goodness of Christianity	55	52%
Reflection and questions	20	19%
Witnessing	17	16%
Preaching	14	13%

This table makes sense considering the context that the gospel is so new in the Sonjo. Yet they realize it is growing slowly and that it is there to stay. As such, those still following the tribal religion are more impacted by the actual witness of Christianity itself among their people, as opposed to preaching and witnessing. One unbeliever shared “The difference between the person who goes to church and the one who does not go to church—they are having a good heart, a good spirit, they do not have sin.” Another unbeliever was emphasizing the changes he has seen in people. When I asked him about the benefits of Christianity coming into the Sonjo area he said, “For example, if I give you a short history, there are those people who are very bad and rude but now they are



saved and they are very good people. There are those people who could drink to death but when they got saved, they left alcohol, they are pressing on with a good life.”

These comments were very common. Another unbeliever shared about Christians, “When you look at the way they do act and walk and live, they have left a lot of things like alcohol, just insulting someone openly and freely, they have stopped. You find out that they are good people.” Another unbeliever commented on the benefits of the Christian families, “When you read the Bible and listen to their opinions, if you look at the matters regarding the family, you find them better than the family situation for those who are not saved.”

This is a great testimony to Christianity among the Sonjo. Though earlier I mentioned the impact of a poor representation of the gospel, it seems that the good far outweighs the bad. At the end of the day, the Sonjo people may not like Christianity, they may have fears of leaving their false god, they may resist the segregation, but they are clear on one thing—Christianity has many benefits.

#### Findings on the Analysis of “to be saved”

Christianity is somewhat synonymous with the term salvation. We urge listeners “to be saved” and receive salvation. This terminology is alive and well in missions efforts in Tanzania, including the Sonjo. To learn specifically how the Sonjo view this concept, I asked the participants, both believers and unbelievers, to define what does it mean “to be saved.” Answers were provided by eighteen believers and seven unbelievers.

For the believers, the feedback was much more consistent with earlier patterns identified. Their answers were categorized into three main categories. The first pattern

noted was the repetition that “to be saved” involves moving away from evil, sin, pagan practices, leaving alcohol, as well as stopping unkind behaviors such as gossip and fighting. The main idea was that there is a movement away from darkness.

The next main pattern was the obvious result which is that “to be saved” is to move toward God. This was described by such things as having peace, freedom, loving God, knowing right and wrong, relying on God, receiving revelation and guidance, obeying and loving God, having a quality life, and receiving help from the Holy Spirit. These factors impact life here and now. In addition, there were comments that this moving towards God ultimately results in inheriting the kingdom of God, going to God, going to heaven, and having eternal life.

The third main pattern dealt with the change that enables a person to move away from the darkness and towards God. There were many references to this change process. They described the change as being rescued, reconciled, redeemed from the power of the devil, escaping danger, getting freedom from bondage, receiving Jesus inside, knowing truth, securing yourself from fear, and having power to overcome sin. Table 5.8 illustrates this overview of how the Sonjo view the concept “to be saved” according to these three main components.

**Table 5.8**  
Sonjo Believers’ Perception of What it Means “To Be Saved”

Comment	Category	Occurrences	Percentage
Refers to leaving sin, evil, practices, past.	Moving away	14	28%
Refers to changes due to being rescued, freed, empowered, secured.	Change	11	22%
Refers to moving towards a new life comprised of peace, freedom, knowing God, receiving revelation, knowing right and wrong, going to heaven.	Moving towards	25	50%

For the unbelievers, naturally there is less understanding of the concept. Even with this knowledge gap as well as fewer participants, similar categories were still used to give an overview. From their observations and conversations, they had a sense that “to be saved” involved leaving sin and moving toward God. It is interesting that there were no references to the change allowing that transformation to happen as seen in the feedback from believers. This makes sense as unbelievers are seeing people before and after salvation but they are not as aware of the inner transformation which brings the change. They had a few references to the concept of eternity. Lastly, there were two comments which showed a total disconnect from the concept “to be saved.” In one case the participant responded what it means “to be saved” with this answer: “I was a student and we were chosen to go to the church and we entered the choir until the certificates were given.” The other participant simply answered that she had not heard of salvation or “to be saved” at all. Table 5.9 represents these responses from the Sonjo unbelievers regarding their perception.

**Table 5.9**  
Sonjo Unbelievers’ Perception of What it Means “To Be Saved”

Comment	Category	Occurrences	Percentage
Refers to leaving sin, alcohol, repent of sins, leave many things	Moving away	4	36%
Refers to change	Change	0	0%
Refers to moving towards a new life comprised of good life, going to God, knowing how to care for good things, having mercy, and obeying God	Moving towards	5	45%
Refers to something unrelated or no comment	Unrelated	2	18%

### Findings from Analysis of Photography

Due to logistics and limited cameras, there were only five participants who submitted photographs, three believers and two unbelievers. Even so, the use of photography proved to be a valuable asset in the data analysis. Being so focused on the research, I forgot the obvious fascination and joy which the villagers experience when there is see a camera in action. Then for the camera to be in their own hands was even more exciting.

The participants were asked to take photographs to capture these three ideas: 1) a benefit or positive impact of Christianity; 2) a risk or negative impact of Christianity; and 3) what is causing unbelievers to want to know more about Christianity. I selected twenty-five photographs for analysis. The first and last question both dealt with the same idea from a slightly different angle. There were eighteen photographs taken for these two questions. Each participant explained how the photo answered the question.

The overwhelming perception by believers and unbelievers was that Christianity is helping the community. Their comments include twenty-two references to many different examples of how Christian help was demonstrated: through medical clinics, new schools, creating better relationships in the family and among neighbors, living a better life, helping your neighbor, creating a better future for the children, offering prayers for physical healing, offering spiritual support, and having an overall better quality of life. Table 5.10 highlights the various ways Sonjo believers see Christianity making a positive impact as well as factors that are drawing the Sonjo to Christianity. The table shows an overview of how many references were made to these activities in the photographs taken by believers.

**Table 5.10**  
Believers' positive perception of Christianity seen in photography

How Christianity is helping the community	Occurrences	Percentage
Provides spiritual services such as seminars, crusades, healing	4	29%
Promotes an overall good quality of life	4	29%
Provides restoration of marriage and family relationships	2	14%
Promotes community development	2	14%
Provides medical services	1	7%
Supports socializing among peers and unity between different religions	1	7%

The hope was for the photography data to uncover new ideas not found in the focus groups and interviews. This indeed was the case. There was overlap in the recognition of the benefits of Christianity. However, there were new ideas captured by the images. One example is a photograph of men and women sitting together eating. This is shown below in Figure 5.1.

**Figure 5.1**  
Christianity has a positive impact on socializing and community



The explanation was that, “Servants of God are eating together at the house of the pastor. These Christians have brought love and unity among Christians that they are able to visit each other and share together.” I asked how the other Sonjo unbelievers would view this. The answer was that, “They see a lot of love for the believers more than them. That men and women to sit together is amazing to them. They like it too for themselves but the cultural god does not allow them. It is shameful thing in the culture for a boy and girl to eat together.”

Another impact to the relational fabric of the society was seen in several photographs taken in response to the third question regarding factors that are drawing people to Christianity. One vivid image shows a mother standing close to her children. This is seen below in Figure 5.2.

**Figure 5.2**  
Christianity has a positive impact on the family unity



The explanation was that, “According to culture children stay far away from parents but here you can see they are close to mama. For boys and girls to stand all together with mama...this is not possible in the culture. When they see this is when they confess that there is a certain ability which has enabled us to be like that. To them it is just bad and shameful.”

Similarly the same was said for relationships between a man and a woman. Figure 5.3 shows a man standing close to his wife which is not normal in the culture.

**Figure 5.3**  
Christianity has a positive impact on the marriage



The explanation was that, “The pastor and his wife standing together and touching each other shows love that unbelievers do not have. They see the difference. They see the life there and they do not have it.” I asked if the people wanted this kind of freedom in their marriage and he said, “Yes they do.”

One last photo to mention is of a woman who looks very sad and depleted. As such, the explanation alone will be given without the image. The pastor who took her photo gave this explanation:

This mama wants to know more about Christianity. It shows she has no joy, no peace. That woman is always asking me, “Why are you always happy? And why do you always have peace?” I reply to her, “Once you give your life to Christ, you will be having joy and peace.”

I asked him if she wants to know more and he replied, “Yes. She asks why are Christians having joy and love. She says, ‘I do not have joy and peace.’”

These images give clues into the mind of the Sonjo people and how they are observing the changes introduced by Christianity. Peace, love, and joy are seen in the lives of believers. Yet these blessings are coming in unsuspecting ways. For men and women to mix and adults and children to be close are totally foreign concepts. But the relational appeal is working.

In terms of the unbelievers who took photographs, the main observation is that the unbelievers are noticing that Christians are kind, they care for others, and Christian efforts are benefiting the whole community. This is seen through efforts such as medical clinics, school buildings built by the church, school fees provided for needy families, acts of kindness for others in need, as well as Christians mixing with the culture and promoting unity between Christian Sonjo and those following the traditional religion. Table 5.11 shows an overview of how many references were made to these activities in the photographs taken by unbelievers.

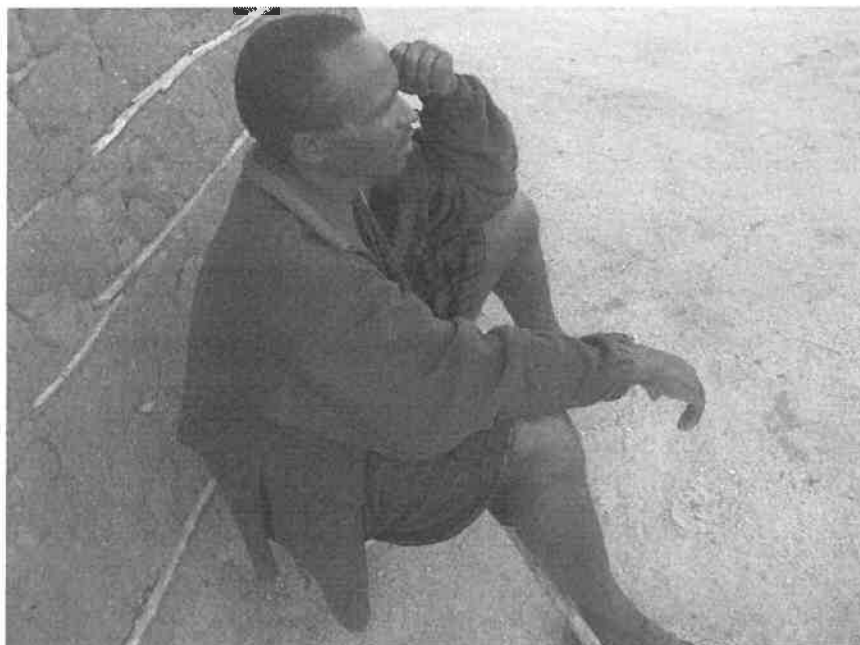


**Table 5.11**  
Unbelievers' positive perception of Christianity seen in photography

How Christianity is helping the community	Occurrences	Percentage
Provides school buildings and school fees for the children	3	43%
Demonstrates kindness to neighbors such as helping new mothers and widows	2	29%
Provides medical services	1	14%
Supports socializing among peers and unity between different religions	1	14%

For the first question regarding the positive impact of Christianity, unbelievers talk regularly about the medical clinic of 2009. This showed up in many of the photographs. This medical clinic was my first effort in the Sonjo when we brought in several doctors and nurses for one week. They remember it like it was yesterday. One photograph was of a person who was treated at the clinic as seen in Figure 5.4.

**Figure 5.4**  
Christianity helps the community through medical services



The explanation was, “This is one of the people who got treated at the medical clinic in 2009. He is one of the people who was really happy with that kind of ministry. They say if this kind of ministry could be available here in Sonjo, they would be really happy. All those things were done through Christianity. So this is a good thing.

There were also many references and photographs of a new school building being built for orphans on the church property. The local Assembly of God church initiated the project without outside funding. The people know that the pastor and the church want to help the community through the school. Figure 5.5 shows the school which is nearly finished. The church is in seen also in this photograph in the background.

**Figure 5.5**  
Christianity helps the community by building schools



The explanation was, “School buildings that the pastor is building. You see those buildings. They also came through Christianity. So Christians came and helped the Sonjo

people. So through sponsoring the school is going to help by sponsoring children who are not able to pay for themselves.”

The school is just one example of how the community sees that the church and Christians are related to community development. Many others commented that the church is attracting development. Sonjo people are now building their homes and opening small shops near the church. Though when the pastor built the church there, it was totally barren with no one living nearby.

One of my favorite photographs captures a simple act of kindness. The impression it made on the unbeliever is immeasurable. It shows the magnitude of walking out what we say. Figure 5.6 shows a woman, who is a Christian, visiting the home of another lady who has just given birth. The Christian lady is bringing water and soap to the new mother, who is not allowed to do basic activities for three months according to the Sonjo religion.

**Figure 5.6**  
Christianity Helps Those in Need



The explanation was that, “This mama is saved. She is Christian. She is going to her neighbor’s house. She is taking water to her. I saw her taking water to her neighbor who had just delivered a baby. So the neighbor is not a Christian. So I would like people to learn from the example of this mama. It does not matter if her neighbor is Christian but just because it is a human being. So that would be a very good example that people should imitate.”

Another interesting photograph deals with one of the largest obstacles Christianity is facing among the Sonjo, the idea of being segregated if you become a Christian. Too often new believers are told to not mix or participate at all with their culture. This is not beneficial. What is needed is for the new believers to discern what is pagan and what is simply culture not related to pagan rituals or things that conflict with Christianity. This is a huge challenge. As a result, it is easier to pull away from all the cultural expressions. This is happening among the Sonjo. The unbelievers see this and are highly discouraged by the fear of losing all contact with their fellows if they become a Christian. They are equally hurt by the loss of relationship when Christians pull away from them.

One unbeliever took a photograph of the young men in the warrior age group sitting together under a tree. Some of the men are Christians and others are not. Due to the sensitive nature of the warrior age group, this image is not included. What is interesting is what this meant to the participant taking the photograph who is not a believer. His explanation was, “Sonjo young men sitting. It shows unity among Christians. All are not Christian. They came to help one of these guys. The one they are helping is also a Christian. All are not Christian but they are all together helping.”

One last photograph highlights the simple acts of kindness of believers recognized by the community. A pastor allows his home to be used by a lady for her sewing business as seen in Figure 5.7.

**Figure 5.7**  
Christianity helps women find work



The explanation is simply, “Pastor allows house to be used by a lady who sews.” This participant wanted to provide more answers to the third question though he did not have enough photographs to express his views. He said “love” is what is causing Sonjo to draw closer to Christianity.

These photos again are from believers and unbelievers in response to questions one and three. The second photography question dealt with the risk or negative impact of Christianity. I was not too surprised that the unbelievers did not offer any feedback to this question. However the believers did try. Their answers were mostly unrelated. Rather they showed images of the negative impact of culture on the people rather than the

negative impact of Christianity. However one photograph was interesting and it reiterates a theme in the other data. This is the idea that Sonjo people fear being poor if they convert to Christianity. Figure 5-8 shows a photo of a mud hut.

**Figure 5-8**  
Will I be poor if I become Christian?



The explanation was, “This shows a house that is not able to handle fire. Once a person is saved they will ask—will I be living in such a house.”

The photograph showed consistent themes with the other findings but they added a rich texture to the thematic ideas. As is the case with photography, these photos provided vivid imagery expressing the themes of the findings. The images of the family standing close to each other as well as men and women eating together are forever etched in my mind. It is sobering to think that these types of relationships are somewhat scandalous to the Sonjo yet from the western perspective they are intrinsic to life. It highlights the contrasting worldviews and adds value to appreciating the cross-cultural realities of the most basic concepts such as loving your family. It is fair to say that the

photos answered far more than the question given to the participant; they gave a greater insight into the Sonjo way of life and thinking.

## **Summary of Findings**

### **Positive Perceptions**

In my field study, I found that there is a growing openness to Christianity, which is seen as good. The people see that individual believers have an overall better quality of life. They admit that Christians live with more peace, joy, and freedom. They see more meaningful relationship in the family. It is appealing to them. Christians are believed to have access to God's power as seen in answered prayers and divine protection from curses and mishap.

They also see that Christianity helps the community. The people even associate community development with the church. The most powerful witness operating now in fact is the Christian community in action. They see their unity, acts of kindness, inclusion of the whole community, projects such as schools and medical clinics, and faithfulness despite rejection and persecution.

### **Negative Perceptions**

Though Christians are nice and they help the people, the bottom line is that they are segregated from much of society. Christianity brings shame. Shame is a nightmare. The data shows that Christianity poses a threat to some of the core needs and concerns of the Sonjo including work, money, children, community and justice.

Even more concerning is the belief that ultimately Christianity could even lead to death. They know that someone will invoke a curse against them if they accept Jesus and abandon the Sonjo god. They believe the curses work so they fear death, sickness, or loss. This belief in the curse is evident in a story from one participant about her father's conversion as an old man. His conversion occurred after he mourned the loss of his first born son, though the son was alive and well. His son got saved away at boarding school in the city. The father knew his son would die from a curse after becoming a Christian, so he mourned his son's loss in advance. When his son never died, after several years, the old man knew his son's God must be the real God and he too became a Christian.

The last blow is that Christianity is perceived as a pathway to poverty, the very thing people strive to avoid. This belief somewhat defies their logic. They observe that Christians in fact are not poor but they are convinced that Christians become vulnerable financially. This is because Christians give offering and tithes. They go to church a lot instead of working. They also forfeit the standard means of income through alcohol. Lastly, Christians abandon the witchdoctor, which is known to be a primary means of wealth management. For these reasons, Christians are seen to be at a distinct financial disadvantage. The Sonjo people definitely do not want that. Though the Sonjo have this opinion, many believers appear to be doing fine so there is a disconnect in their expectation and reality. Because of fear and a lack of understanding, the perception of being poor if you become a Christian remains.



## Hindrances

The findings reveal that poor examples of Christianity distract people from the true gospel. Unbelievers realize that some Christians and churches are completely phony. It causes them to ask many questions as to why people do such things as mixing the Christian religion with their traditional religion. Many stories about the Lutheran and Catholic church from both believers and unbelievers testify to this. It forced the people even to use the term “true Christian” and “true born again.” This refers to believers who had a life change and demonstrated a pulling away from certain pagan rituals as opposed to those who enter the Lutheran and Catholic churches and continue to mix with the Sonjo idolatry. Similarly the people are quick to recognize hypocrisy and backsliding. There were many references to these types of behaviors.

Another simple but telling finding is seen in how people described the meaning of “to be saved.” Both believers and unbelievers gave many references to explain that “to be saved” involved leaving evil and moving toward a new good life with new God. However the believers also gave many references to the change that allows that transition. They spoke of being rescued, reconciled, freed, and empowered. Unbelievers did not reference this concept of the change. They only saw the results of the change in people. It suggests there is a gap in their understanding of how this change is actually happening. A comment from the photo of the mother standing with her children (Figure 5-2) illustrates this gap. When I asked the pastor what people think of the mother being close to her children, he said, “It is when they confess that there is a certain ability which has enabled us to be like that.” They recognize a “certain ability” but they do not realize what that ability is or its source.

### Factors fostering openness to Christianity

The findings reveal a difference between conversion factors for the existing believers and the others who follow the Sonjo god. Existing believers referred to people witnessing to them, hearing preaching, and testimonies. Usually this occurred over and over again, sometimes for years. There were many occurrences of sovereign acts of God. People were delivered of demons without anyone praying. They heard voices saying, “get saved.” They were delivered from danger supernaturally. Some had lived outside of the Sonjo area. They were surprised to find that people did not follow the Sonjo customs in other places. Lastly, in many cases, the conversion came at a time of personal need.

For the traditional Sonjo still following their ancestral worship, the critical factor was observing the lives of individual Christians. They testified confidently to the changes which they say reflect a good heart and a good spirit. Many claimed that the typical ills of society such as drunkenness and stealing lost their hold on Christians. They also commented that rudeness, gossip, and slander no longer dominated new believers. Naturally, they observe that the Christian community makes a positive contribution to the society. One poignant comment from an unbeliever captures this sentiment:

It’s like we have been covered by a certain blanket and it’s like these people are opening our eyes. It is like there was a certain cover over the Sonjo people but through the coming of the Christians, that blanket has been taken off and the light has started coming.

Lastly a common experience for all participants was the need to reflect, ask questions, and dialogue. Christianity presents many foreign ideas on which they need to meditate. This includes pondering the possibility of a true God outside the Sonjo god, struggling with the implications, and wanting to know more. Often these questions and

concerns were usually not easily answered or not at all answered by the Christian community.

### **Conclusion on Findings**

Naturally with qualitative studies, the biggest challenge is often the massive amount of data generated. This was the case with this research project. The complexity of the data was accentuated by the cross-cultural and tribal worldview components. Yet the value added by the various data sources as well as the number of participants from various samples increased the confidence regarding the picture painted by the data. The next chapter will provide additional reflection on the data, implications, as well as conclusions.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **REFLECTIONS, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION**

#### **General Reflections**

##### **Overview**

At this point in the diffusion of Christianity among the Sonjo tribe, believers and unbelievers alike agree that there are many benefits from Christianity. They see the change on a personal level. Drunks become sober. Thieves stop stealing. Husbands stop beating their wives. Depression turns into joy. They see the heart of Christianity is to bless people. The actions of Christians are kind and they are thinking of the whole community as seen in medical services, schools, and prayers offered for anyone in need. In addition, unbelievers see something different in the homes of believers. Husbands and wives have something new—love that is kind with men valuing women. They see the same with children being embraced and valued which is a foreign idea to them. It is drawing them close and causing them to see the freedom the Christian families enjoy.

On the other side however, there is a distinction between believers and unbelievers concerning a negative perception of Christianity. Whereas believers did not report negative perceptions, unbelievers clearly have a negative feeling when they think of the consequences of accepting Christianity. The issue is that the consequences of

Christianity are enormous, challenging core values, and can even be life-threatening. The findings indicate that shame and fear are the major roadblocks.

Herein lies the tension: great benefit yet at a great cost. Unbelievers have had enough time now to see believers pass through the fires of rejection and keep their faith with joy and forgiveness. It is causing people to reconsider the validity of their fears and the sting of shame. The gospel has been there long enough that they are now thinking it is not going away. Christians are not giving in to intimidation and even beatings. The unbelievers see the peace and unity among them. It is causing them to think. Some of the unbelievers interviewed sounded as if they were believers. They spoke of the benefits and gain of Christianity. When asked what was holding them back, they said, "It is only to decide." In the past, the resistance was so bad that people were killed for sharing Jesus. Yet now the powerful persistence of the few is making a loud statement regarding the future of Christianity among the Sonjo. It is fair to say that the skeptics and the curious alike realize that Christianity is there to stay.

Many people used the term "nowadays" to describe a shift in thinking. They shared "nowadays" they are asking believers for prayer instead of the witchdoctor because they know people are healed from Christian prayers. Nowadays they love listening to the praise music and even the mamas and the warriors walk about freely listening to it. Now there is no problem to gather together in homes and they are asking us why their god has lost his power.

In addition to the actual data, there was also a sense and mood observed during research. It all seemed to suggest that the Sonjo tribe is approaching the tipping point with their openness to the gospel. It was quite interesting to hear them speak of

prophecies of their false god, Hambegeo, who they say even prophesied that there would come a new belief one day and the old faith would be forgotten. The prophecy said that by the time men put a stick with fire in their mouths (they believe this to be cigarettes, which is a more recent activity) and people dance back and forth (they believe this to be disco, which is a more recent activity), this will be the time that the old religion fades. One man has actually determined to write this history and publish it for the Sonjo people to see the errors in the whole religion.

## Discussion

### *Innovators, Early Adopters, and Others*

This study centered on the spread of Christianity in an unreached people where Christianity represents a massive disruption as it challenges the very worldview of the listeners. The reflections in this section are centered on aspects of this diffusion process. In terms of the theories of social and behavioral change, diffusion of innovation theory offers a framework for discussing the findings. Much study has been done in this field with Everett's classic work, *The Diffusion of Innovation*, still regarded as a seminal text on the topic.<sup>272</sup>

Everett refers to diffusion as, "a kind of social change, defined as the process by which alteration occurs in the structure and function of a social system."<sup>273</sup> As all religions are intermingled with the social fabric of a society, Christianity can then be seen as a social innovation among the Sonjo. It impedes social structure causing age mates to

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<sup>272</sup> See Everett M. Rogers, *The Diffusion of Innovation*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York, NY: Free Press, 1995).

<sup>273</sup> Rogers, 6.

feel they have been deserted by their friends. It is a direct assault on the traditional tribal religion which is laced with social obligations, claiming that the Sonjo religion is false and that Christianity offers the one true God. Ultimately it challenges the very identity of being “Sonjo.” As the culture and social structures are imbedded in the religious practices, it results in Christianity being viewed as disruptive and divisive. There are different reactions to this disruption.

Diffusion theory considers these different reactions and identifies five primary roles of responders: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards.<sup>274</sup> The innovators are the ones who are the first to accept and use a new idea. The key for them is the information about the innovation.<sup>275</sup> They have never seen the idea work but they hear about it and are open to trying it. Through careful examination of the information they are willing to take the risk.

In this sense the preaching of the gospel and explaining the new faith—providing knowledge—is paramount to reaching innovators. This is reflected in many of the existing believers in the Sonjo, the innovators. They are the ones who referred more to hearing the message of the gospel as the main factor in their conversion. They were primarily moved by knowledge—the gospel message. They cited many references to preaching, witnessing, and sovereign moves of God such as dreams and sovereign deliverances. They heard the message of the new idea—Christianity—and sensed a validation of the message through the supernatural, thereafter, they were able to respond when others could not or would not.

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<sup>274</sup> Rogers, 37.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 197.

The next group in diffusion theory, called early adopters, parallels another set of believers in the Sonjo. The early adopter believers observed the innovator believers and were able to overcome their obstacles where others who were observing could not or would not. We then have both innovators and early adopters reflected in the findings as it relates to the diffusion of Christianity among the Sonjo tribe.

The other three adopter categories in the diffusion theory are pending in terms of application to the gospel penetrating the Sonjo tribe. The innovation of the gospel has yet to reach the next category of early majority. Those remaining are observing and thinking but they are not willing to take the risk or adjust to the change. According to diffusion theory, rather than knowledge influencing these groups, the main contributing factor for them is to observe the impact of the innovation. They wonder if the innovation even works. This parallels what was seen with the unbelievers in the study. This group needs time to see how the innovation will unfold. They are not moved as much by the information of the new idea—Christianity—as much as they are in seeing “Does Christianity work?”<sup>276</sup>

The factors causing an openness to Christianity among the unbelievers revealed this mindset. The main factors drawing unbelievers closer was the notion that “Christianity works.” Lives are changed for the better and the society also benefits. Examples were helping neighbors, forgiving, resisting violence, building schools, and living more freely. On the other hand, the unbelievers are still watching to see how Christianity will work for those children who have not passed through the rituals. So the people see there is something working but they are still reticent. The resistance however,

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<sup>276</sup> Rogers, 264.



is waning. This is characteristic of those who lag behind the innovators and early adopters.

A closing comment regarding diffusion of innovation theory relates to the future and the ongoing process of the diffusion of Christianity among the Sonjo. Diffusion theory supports the view that a key for innovators is hearing the new information through mass media whereas for the groups lagging behind a key is persuasion through interpersonal relationships.<sup>277</sup> This seems very consistent with the findings among the Sonjo. Many have heard the message but only a few have accepted. The innovators heard the message, sought out ways to validate the information, and were able to take hold of it. Then early adopters who were not as quick to respond, were most impacted by interacting with the first believers (innovators). They sat and talked with them, observed their home and families, and their change of behavior. In the process they were persuaded whereas the knowledge alone was not enough for them.

It will be important to consider how this relates to evangelism in the Sonjo. Because the Sonjo still have less than two percent adherents to Christianity, they are actually in need of different strategies to reach more innovators and early adopters as well as those lagging behind. Diffusion theory confirms the idea that different strategies be used with different adopter categories since each group is evaluating the innovation differently.<sup>278</sup>

With this in mind, the crusades, witnessing, preaching, and other methods must continue. More innovators are needed as well as early adopters since the need for the gospel remains great among the Sonjo. At the same time, it will be wise to realize how

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<sup>277</sup>Ibid., 197.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 275.

vital the visible Christian witness and interaction is to those who are watching. The Christian community in action and in relationship may preach louder than a sermon to those who are lagging behind yet have already heard the message.

*Using all Means Plus Mass Evangelism*

The findings gave the author a new theological angle on evangelism among UPGs. This insight emerged after considering the conversion stories of believers. Instead of finding a key to their conversion, what was consistently found was a myriad of factors. Their spiritual journey was often long and multi-faceted. There were dreams, sickness, school programs, sovereign deliverances, hard times, witnessing, crusades, exposure to other faiths, songs, healing, radio testimonies, power encounters, voices, and more. This challenged the author's premise that there might be a key to UPG evangelism. Rather than one key or holistic healing as a key, the pattern in the findings showed that often conversions took a long time and involved many different contributing factors. It supports the idea of abundant evangelism of all kinds as well as mass evangelism. This aligns with the classic church planting manual which describes abundant sowing of seed—abundant evangelism—as one of the ten common characteristics of church planting movements around the world over the last few decades.<sup>279</sup> Previously the author did not favor mass evangelism due to the apparent lack of lasting fruit. However, this study shows that the innovators are best reached with mass means and that the best way to reach more innovators would include mass methods as well as a variation in methods.

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<sup>279</sup> David V. Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (Richmond, VA: Office of Overseas Operations, International Mission Board of Southern Baptist Convention, 1999), 177-181.

### *Positive Deviance*

Another observation was the idea that God has sovereignly ensured that there are people waiting and ready to discern and receive the truth in unreached people groups. This was seen in the conversion stories of the Sonjo believers. As a small child, one man said that he knew the Sonjo religion was strange because they taught you to hate your mother and not speak to her for months. He said when he heard the teachings of the church he knew they were true. He had always been suspect of his tradition and was really just waiting for truth to appear. Another lady said she had spirits operating in her and she heard the preacher call them out at the crusade. She said from that moment on, she knew she wanted to follow the Christian path. It was like she was sitting and waiting to hear. Several others told of hearing a similar voice saying, “You need to get saved. If you do not get saved you will die.”

It seemed as if the innovators, the early adopters, were placed there by God for his redemptive purposes. It appeared that the innovators were just waiting to hear the truth. This idea aligns with positive deviance theory (PD) which says that the solutions to social and behavioral change are within the community itself.<sup>280</sup> Singhal states the premise of PD is “that in every community there are individuals or families whose practices and behaviors enable them to find better solutions to problems than their neighbors who have

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<sup>280</sup> ArvhindSinghal and Lucia Dura, *Protecting Children from Exploitation and Trafficking, Using the Positive Deviance Approach in Uganda and Indonesia* (El Paso, TZ: Social Justice Initiative with Save the Children, 2009), 1.

access to the same resources.”<sup>281</sup> Those units become “positive deviants” in that they deviate from the norm and it is in a positive manner.

In the case of the diffusion of Christianity among the Sonjo, the innovators of Christianity—the early believers—are positive deviants. Not only are they the innovators but they can shape the solution for ongoing efforts. Instead of focusing on obstacles to unbelievers, PD encourages a study of why the positive deviants have changed. That discovery will give clues as to how to bring change to others. This suggests that the existing believers among the Sonjo hold the main solutions for how to reach the Sonjo. In essence, the answers are within the people. They only need access to the gospel and then they become the change agents. A powerful witness to this comes from one believer’s interview. I asked him what the Sonjo people think of Christianity,

Once you are a person who is born again and you are speaking too much, you’re talkative, you’re leading people into prayers and repentance but after a few days you’re already backsliding. So what I have learned is that people from Sonjo admire seeing a real love that is produced as an outcome from the Christians. And people should not be born again and after a few days backsliding again. So once Christians unite, and love each other, and avoid backsliding, it will lead a lot of people to born again.

Even this statement shows that the Sonjo believers already see challenges within Christianity. They do not need an outside person to tell them that backsliding is hurtful. They already see this. They also see the solution—genuine love demonstrated by the Christian community. Recognizing solutions within the local people is of course not how most western missionaries devise their missions strategies. The need for this type of

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<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

asset-based over need-based approach is well documented by Fikkert and Corbett in *When Helping Hurts*.<sup>282</sup>

### *Trustworthiness*

A final reflection makes note of the feedback from the outside analysts. Their input was reviewed after data analysis was completed by the author. Both analysts reviewed all three sets of data. Because of the amount of interview data, they were both given only ten participant interviews to review which included believers and unbelievers. They provided summaries including the top three observations for the following: benefits, risks, patterns of conversion experiences, factors influencing receptivity towards the gospel, and implications for evangelism in UPGs. Their lists of observations were nearly identical to the author's findings. There were several items noted which the author did not include. One analyst noted the age/gender factor regarding receptivity towards the gospel. It was clear that young ladies were more open than young men due to the issue of justice and war which affects the men. In addition, she proposed a look at specific influencing factors related to different social/age groups.

The analysts also answered this question: "What does this data reveal about taking the gospel to an unreached people group?" The top answer given by both analysts was that the findings emphasize the power of the ongoing local Christian witness among the people—traditional Sonjo people observing the changed lives of believers and the good works of the Christian community. This aligns with the reflections previously shared by

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<sup>282</sup> Brian Fikkert and Steve Corbett, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Without Hurting the Poor and Yourself* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2009).

the author. Overall the input from the outside analysts was a valuable tool for evaluating the author's analysis. The author feels that the consistency in their reports strengthens the findings of this study.

### **Implications for Practice**

#### **Holistic Healing Evangelism**

The data gives a window into what the Sonjo are thinking. This is a gold mine of information for knowing how to engage their concerns regarding Christianity: the fear of being poor, the fear of a curse, and the dread of shame. This whole project was motivated by the premise that the gospel must touch the spiritual felt needs of the people which span holistic realities involving emotions, thoughts, and strongholds. The findings show that unbelievers fear the power of Hambegeo and they have a lack of understanding of God's power to protect them. The goal of exploring holistic healing evangelism is justified by the degree to which fear and shame were found to be controlling and limiting factors operating among the Sonjo people. The Sonjo perception of Christianity reveals a gap in understanding the power operating in believers, the source of that power, how to get it, and how it relates to the power of Hambegeo. The real questions, not surprisingly, surround power. This is seen in the first step of analysis which showed "power" to be the most commonly repeated idea in the data. This power struggle is another factor which justifies the continued development of the holistic healing evangelism model.

## Evangelism through Dialogue

The most basic implication for future evangelism among the Sonjo is to engage the people in dialogue about their perception as opposed to simply preaching and inviting people to church. It was overwhelmingly clear that people are observing, reflecting, and wondering about some very basic concerns. They are not at all ready to come to a church. But they are open and looking for answers. Some of their concerns could be solved simply with discussion. One young warrior was eager to get saved on the spot during the interview when we answered his question about money and the church. He wondered why people give money to the pastor, what a tithe was, and if it was bad if you did not have a tithe. Using Scriptures the author's team explained tithes and why we support pastors. He received clear answers to several other simple questions on why there were many denominations and the consequences of backsliding. Suddenly he said, "Stop answering. I have already understood you. I am ready to get saved right now." He went on to say that these questions had been troubling him a long time. He had asked people but he did not get clear answers.

Out of the ten unbelievers who participated, two wanted to get saved on the spot during the interview. One other participant also was saved a week later. He was the village chairman of the key pastor's village. The chairman's main question was, "I am a good person. Will I not go to heaven also? Why do I need to agree with Jesus if I am good person anyway?" We discussed this with him for some time and then he suddenly said it was time to go home. Actually it was time for him to gather his goats, but it seemed that he also was feeling the tension of the discussion. The author was shocked to hear his testimony that a week later, he was in a bar drinking away his kids school fees.

He was totally drunk and suddenly had the clarity of mind that what he was doing was not right. He walked home in the dark and got up the next morning, went to church and was saved. He happens to be one of the pastor's closest friends. All were shocked to see him in the church and the pastor even challenged him to see if he was serious. He was.

Others shared how much they enjoyed talking and how uncommon it was to have that type of dialogue. Most of their interaction with Christians is primarily listening as Christians are witnessing. Time to share fair and honest questions was not that common. It would be helpful for the Christians to have good answers to the main concerns.

One project the author will undertake is to create a tract to distribute among the Sonjo for discussion which includes answers to their questions and concerns found in the research. This project will include training for the believers on the opportunity they have to engage in dialogue and tools for how to answer with Scriptures.

### Segregation

A third implication is that evangelism efforts would benefit by engaging the paramount problem that Christianity disrupts the fabric of society. The data shows that the shame associated with this segregation is holding the people captive. Though fear of a curse and death had almost equal mention, there was a sense that shame is more dreadful than sickness or death. This worldview is not just Sonjo, it is African. These are relational, communal-based societies where the thinking may be captured with, "I belong in society, therefore I exist." Fitting in equals existing.

The power of this mindset can never be fully understood by outsiders. But it can be acknowledged and engaged to the best of our abilities. This needs to be addressed



because most missions efforts generate from people with different worldviews. Western missionaries do not have the fear of shame. We actually are driven more by being different, free, and independent. As it is now, even the local Sonjo believers are influenced by western training which unfortunately leads typically to a wholesale exclusion of culture thus creating the rift. Missions efforts need to take more responsibility for this handicap and try harder to find ways for the gospel to spread with less disruption.

One revelation the author had early in the interviews was confirmed over and over throughout the discussions. Almost all the believers shared that they were intimidated by their age mates as well as family and friends. People would gather at the believer's house or they would call a meeting. They would ask, "Why have you left us? Is it true you are leaving us? We need you." They would even encourage the believer to do whatever he wants with Christians but pleaded with them not to leave the cultural practices.

This could be mistaken for just a rebellious spirit working to keep people in bondage. If that is the case, the approach is to stand your ground and pray against darkness. This is of course partially the case. However the revelation was that it might not all be a rebellious resistance. The stories consistently showed that the age group shared life through the various activities, ceremonies, and cultural practices. It is all for one and one for all. So to lose one person is not ok. They care about each other. So it seemed that some of the resistance is simply a desire to continue sharing life with people. They see Christianity as a ditch that separates them. One young man who is a believer shared that when his father died his sister rebuked him because he did not shave his head. He said, "That is Sonjo culture. I will not do that." His sister told him, "If you do not

shave your head, you are not even my brother.” This type of dialogue shows the power of these traditions. It also begs the question: what is the significance of shaving your head when your father dies? Christians are guilty of charging all cultural practices as pagan when they may not be.

The future missions in Sonjo as well as other unreached people groups would be wise to learn from this mistake which is abundantly evident in missions history. A project will be proposed for the Christian leaders to dialogue about these practices, discern to what degree they are intermingled with pagan worship, and then propose practices that are safe as well as practices which are not. This will be one step towards diffusing the segregation currently operating.

Another proposal will be to find ways for Christians to mix with the culture apart from the pagan practices. Other tribes, including the Maasai, are finding ways to celebrate girls becoming young ladies without the practice of FGM. Instead of not participating at all in the ceremony, it is possible to have a modified celebration. Unbelievers may attend and see that other parts of the culture are preserved though the FGM did not occur. This idea aligns with social change theory, which proposes that, “An individual learns from another by means of observational modeling. The idea is that the individual does not necessarily have to experience a verbal exchange of information for the individual’s behavior to be influenced by the model.”<sup>283</sup>

These types of ideas should be discussed among the Sonjo as they are the ones who know best. Even now, the pastor told me that the people are waiting to see how his children will proceed with marriage because they did not pass through the ceremonies.

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<sup>283</sup> Rogers, 330.

He said when that day comes, the people will be amazed and it will open their hearts even more.

This does not ignore the spiritual battle underlying the diffusion of Christianity. It is surely at work in the minds of those who want to persist with FGM, ancestral worship, and other pagan rituals. That has long been recognized as a contributing factor to resistance. Rather the implication from the findings is simply to augment our understanding by validating and exploring social learning as an evangelistic supplement to preaching and witnessing.

An example of this type of modeling was seen with the 2009 medical clinic hosted by author. The entire community still speaks of the unity of the community to prepare for the clinic. The local people were responsible to market the clinic, build a make shift site with ten stations on an empty lot, run the daily activities which involved hundreds receiving service and hundreds being turned away, feeding and housing forty team members for a week, attaining official permission for the clinic, and more. There was enormous group participation. It was a great example of Christians involving the whole community. Later they reported that unbelievers marveled that all the Christians from different churches worked together and that was when they realized that all the Christians have one God. These types of shared experiences create a social platform which may speak more powerfully to some than a sermon.

### Justice

Tribal justice is a way of life for African tribal people. Typically third world development leads to legal restrictions on how that tribal justice is to operate. This is not

necessarily bad except for the fact that tribal people feel a method of justice was taken away without a new one coming in its place. They are hard pressed to have a hands-off policy when it comes justice. For them violence is necessary specifically when it deals with the livelihood of their livestock. Water and land do create a fighting ground. It occurs often. During each trip the author has made to the Sonjo, this issue arose. On one of the field trips, the war was actually going on not far from where we were talking. People were coming to the pastor's house bringing him updates. It lasted for days with the government not wanting to get involved. The Sonjo and the Maasai were at war over the boundary lines for water and land for the cattle. People died.

In the Sonjo culture the young men are the warriors. They are required to protect the people. One young man told me they are like the local police. People depend on them. An overall sense of stability and future rests in this framework of justice. It is in this context that Christianity comes and says to forgive and abandon violence. The author was aware of this tension but the research gave a much more vivid picture of just how difficult the Christian proposition is, especially to the young warriors. When one young warrior, who is not a believer, shared, the tension was tangible. He was completely stuck with no way out in his mind. He shared, "If you tell the people that God is able to change and stop that war, they won't agree. They will see that you are talking nothing."

This shows the need for the Christian community to find ways to address the justice issue, the violence between Maasai and Sonjo, and the reality that this has been happening for a long time. It is the African way of life and survival. Yet Christianity speaks of reconciliation. This needs to be explored as the warriors have immeasurable influence. In some ways, they top the list of change agents.

Lastly, the very nature of this problem again resonates with the intent of holistic healing evangelism. Justice always involves matters of the heart. At this point Christianity is seen as compromising rather than contributing to justice. Imagine if the people heard an evangelistic message on justice, boundaries lines, fairness, provision, and reconciliation along with a promise of the power which can break spirits of hatred and violence. Ultimately, if they believed Christian hearts and minds could devise a solution to this long-standing conflict, it could have an astounding impact.

### **Emerging Theory**

The grounded theory approach explored the perceptions of the Sonjo regarding Christianity; the risks, benefits and factors fostering conversion. The main obstacles were that Christianity is associated with being poor, being cursed, and being segregated from society. On the positive side Christianity is associated with not doing evil, having peace, and freedom in relationships, good works, and community development. The fruit is seen but simultaneously they cannot justify leaving their god. The reason is fear. It was strange that nearly no one gave voice to taking pride in the cultural practices. They are simply bound to it. The crux of the problem is bondage. It is this issue which the original concept of holistic healing evangelism targets. The data was gathered without looking for a defense of this idea. Yet the data reveals that holistic issues, primarily fear and shame, are paramount. The data shows a gap in how the evangelistic efforts are addressing this fear and shame. The best unbelievers can tell is that believers are taking a great risk and it is only a matter of time until the curse knocks at their door. In essence, they see the change in believers, they see the benefit in society, but they are not given the tools to dismantle

their fear and shame which hold them back. As such, this is one way in which the research model substantiates the idea of the holistic healing evangelism model.

Second, several comments in the interviews stated that power, signs, wonders and miracles are the deciding factor on what people believe. The stories of the false god, Hambegeo, are that he convinced the people he was a god from the miracles he performed. Other stories involved a recent medicine man. A grandfather referred to as “babu” who lives in the Sonjo, has announced that God gave him a dream and has shown him a cure for serious illnesses such as AIDS, cancer, diabetes and more. It has been a phenomenon over the last few years resulting in thousands visiting the babu to drink the special natural cure. In the interviews, believers stated that this shows that people have more faith in the babu for healing than they do in Jesus. Many have reportedly been healed although, many others have died. This appetite for miracles and healing is an innate human hunger. The people have responded traditionally to Hambegeo as well as in the last few years to the babu phenomenon. These give evidence that holistic healing is not only needed but is a primary means of persuasion among the people.<sup>284</sup>

### **Study Limitations**

The main limitation of this study was time. The original hypothesis was to prove that holistic healing evangelism would have a positive impact on evangelism in the Sonjo. Current efforts to share the gospel are primarily through crusades and witnessing. The goal was to measure evangelism content, style and results to date followed by training on holistic healing evangelism, and then to measure again for comparison. There

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<sup>284</sup> AnuRamachandran, "Faith: Friend or Foe?," *Global Health is Local*, (2011): 3.

was not enough time for this type of study. As such the decision to prioritize learning more about the situation versus trying to solve the problem was a worthy solution. However the shift created an awkward gap in the foundational work and in the research. The literature review was modified as needed. The evolution of the goal worked and ultimately, the research yielded valuable advantages by seeking to understand and prioritize the listener.

A second limitation was the location and nature of the context group. The Sonjo were a two-day drive from the author's home in Tanzania. The language barrier not only required a translator but it also increased the potential for misunderstandings. In addition the people are not used to the nature of an interview. People were called to the pastor's house without knowing really what was going to happen. The pastor had instructions but he ended up not following the script. People arrived having no idea what was ahead. One young warrior was fidgeting and about to leave. He asked me if I was a reporter and if this would be published in the paper in the city. I assured him "no" to all his questions. After some time I was able to continue using my audio recorder. Within the culture, my topic was taboo and the idea of discussing the realities of fear and shame was also difficult. All of this of course had some impact on the freedom participants had in sharing.

A third limitation was how the sampling was performed. The key pastor, the gatekeeper for the project, selected all of the thirty participants and he invited all those who participated in the focus groups. This was done for several reasons. First, all of the author's work is done under and through senior pastors. As such, this project and how to select participants was his responsibility. Second, due to the sensitive nature of discussing

religion, the pastor managed to overcome suspicion for participants because he is highly respected and trusted among believers and unbelievers. This is seen in the way people came to his house when he called, often on the spot, without knowing why. Third, he was the gatekeeper and it kept the project safely under his leadership. He always knew what was going on and kept an eye on the situation. This was a priority as well since he was extending himself and opening his community up to this project without fully grasping what it all meant. Regardless, the sampling provided a broad variety of participants. Ultimately this approach satisfied the underlying goal of implementing this research with wisdom and with the author's future ongoing ministry in mind.

### **Lessons Learned**

The Sonjo loved talking. They said they had never sat and talked to a white person. They said, "White people come and do things but they never talk to us." The African relational culture was already a value, but the author gained a greater insight into how much it validates the people and how rare it is. The decision to spend so much time dialoguing was primarily a byproduct of the author's change to implement a grounded theory study of perception. This decision resulted in possibly the greatest value added to the author's work as a missionary.

When it came to evangelism, the author had underestimated hearing from the people. The goal was to come with new strategies for the unreached such as story-telling for oral learners and power evangelism touching body, soul, and spirit. However the goal of understanding the current phenomenon of the diffusion of Christianity opened up a new core value to integrate in the author's overall mission. It was enjoyable and well



worth the time to sit and discuss ideas with people from many backgrounds. Yet in the normal flow of ministry, this type of time and energy is not easily justified. The wealth of understanding, relationship building, and insight into the mindset of the people gained from the research created a strong argument for continuing to fold this type of dialogue into ministry. This perspective reiterates the thinking of positive deviance theory which proposes that answers are within the context group. The author will adjust her ministry methods to be more faithful to her convictions which acknowledge the resourcefulness and wisdom available from a greater participatory approach to ministry.

Without doubt, the greatest lesson learned was from considering the fortitude of the Sonjo believers as compared to the author's personal faith journey. They told of being beaten, hated, mocked by little children, disowned by parents, intimidated with machetes, ignored on the road, and cursed. One man was told that his age mates were going to curse him for not abandoning Jesus and returning to their god. He said, "You go ahead and curse me. I belong to Jesus so if you can cause Jesus to be cursed then maybe I will die." He was totally unafraid and knew their curse would fail. Another man's wife was taken from his house as punishment for leaving the ancestral worship. The man told his age group that he had paid the bride price, the marriage was legal, and the one who could disprove this is the one who had the authority to keep his wife. Otherwise his wife must return. Shortly after, his wife returned and the group retreated. Their testimonies show that the price paid by believers has been high.

In addition, as a missionary with a long-term investment in the Sonjo tribe, the wealth of insight and knowledge gained from this study is immeasurable. The research is

priceless for the author's partners in ministry. It has already begun to inform teams for the future as they prepare for evangelism in the Sonjo tribe.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

An obvious follow up study would be to implement the original idea for this project. This would involve training leaders on holistic healing evangelism along with comparative study of evangelism efforts before and after the training. The study would evaluate the content, style, and fruit of different evangelistic models. Specifically the models used after the training would address holistic healing of body, soul, and spirit.

This study verified a need to the holistic healing evangelism model. To verify a need is one step but to identify a void in meeting that need is another study. A recommended follow-up study would discover to what extent current evangelism addresses the reality of the power struggle, fear, and shame which were predominant findings in this study reflecting the spiritual felt needs of the people. This study would focus on identifying the void of the holistic healing evangelism model.

In addition to this study it would be interesting to learn more about the spiritual worldview of the Sonjo. There were many references to Satan, demons, evil, and sin in the discussions. Believers spoke of being delivered from the spirit of violence and drunkenness. They said it was the first they knew that such a spirit existed. There was much interest in comparing Sonjo religion with Christianity and there was a serious interest in who is the power broker: tradition or the new Christian religion. This study would seek to construct a model of their view of power: what does power look like, where does it come from, who has the power, how is power confronted, the power of the

secret vows, and specifically how to engage the fear of the vows as that appeared be a core stronghold.

Another interesting follow-up project would be to study the core Sonjo religious and cultural practices which Christians abandon when they accept Jesus. This addresses two significant items. First, it is grounded in the data as seen in the theme of segregation. Second, the shame attached to this segregation and the loss of relationship are the exact ideas which holistic healing evangelism addresses. The goal of this study would be two-fold. First, Christians would be encouraged to discern what pagan practices actually conflict with Christianity and which practices are simply culture and could continue. A second goal would be for the study to discover to what extent pagan practices could be altered for the purpose of reducing segregation and preserving the fabric of society, thus also reducing obstacles to Christianity.

Finally it would be practical for a study to explore how to address syncretism among the Catholic and Lutheran churches in this area. The goal would be to make proposals from this study to the heads of the Lutheran and Catholic churches on behalf of reaching the unreached. It would be an overdue ecumenical effort to acknowledge and address this issue.

### **Project Summary**

This project was motivated by a desire to learn more about the phenomenon of why there are so many unreached people two thousand years after receiving the good news and the commission to share it with the world. The context was the author's

missionary field in Tanzania, specifically the Sonjo tribe which is an unreached tribe with a population around 30,000 with less than 300 believers.

The researcher has the opportunity for longevity in the Sonjo tribe. As such, this project focused on step one of rectifying this gap. The goal for this foundational effort was to design and implement a study among the Sonjo tribe which discovers the nature of the gospel which has been presented, considers how the gospel presented indicates a presence or absence of holistic healing addressing the spiritual felt needs of the people, and what has been the impact of the gospel presentation.

The emerging theory supported by the research is that evangelism in the unreached areas which proclaims and demonstrates the power of God to free people from bondage will result in an increase in evangelistic fruit. A power encounter with the living God will open the hearts and minds of people living under the fear of witchcraft and demonic strongholds. Addressing key obstacles to faith including fear and shame will make the message more personally relevant. This full disclosure of Almighty God who desires healing of the body, soul, and spirit, is expected to make a more powerful and positive impact on evangelism.

The project is deemed successful according to the criteria outlined in Chapter Four. To summarize, with the grounded theory approach, the criteria for success is different as the goal is not to prove a theoretical assumption but rather to explore potential relationships and propose a basis for grounding an emerging theory. The findings did substantiate the problem statement regarding holistic healing evangelism which is the motivating factor for the project. The emerging theory is not only grounded

in the data but consequently demonstrates a fit for the Sonjo culture, specifically an unreached tribe adjusting to the diffusion of Christianity into their culture.

### **Conclusion**

This study is founded on the command of Jesus to take the gospel to the whole world. We have not. Some would like to argue that maybe the gospel passed through certain places and it was rejected. This is true in some cases. Even in Europe and North American, we see the emergence of new unreached people who do not even know who Jesus is. This study is not about those cases. Rather it is concerned about those who have little to no access to the gospel, have been in that condition for hundreds of years, and are awaiting our response to Jesus' wish.

With this context in mind, the author reflected on her five years in Tanzania doing evangelism in remote villages. She noticed two concerns. First, the gospel was more propositional focusing on the theological content and less on the power of God to deliver those in bondage to dark powers. It was more proclamation and less demonstration.

This project sought to discover how to bridge this gap and more effectively share the good news with those who are hearing it for the first time. This led to the identification of a model of evangelism which sought a power encounter for those in darkness bound with demonic strongholds which did not allow people to be in control of their thoughts, or emotions, or decisions.

The basis for this was a study of God's strategy of evangelism as seen throughout the Bible. This inquiry showed that God's evangelistic strategy to reveal himself to mankind is consistently a model of freeing body, soul, spirit from all powers that hinder,

reduce, and bind. This strengthened the belief that the unreached who know the power of false gods are desperately awaiting a power encounter with the one true living God, their maker. This encounter could not be limited to a statement of faith which could be accepted or not. No, in fact, the encounter must target the spiritual felt needs of the people. The idea of holistic healing evangelism emerged. This concept implies that evangelism must intend to provide a full disclosure of Almighty God who desires healing and freedom for body, soul, and spirit. It was believed that evangelism in the unreached areas which proclaims and demonstrates this gospel, the power of God to free people from bondage, will result in an increase in evangelistic fruit.

The context of the study was the Sonjo tribe of Tanzania. The research design did not seek to prove the model as valid. It allowed a grounded theory approach to reveal current perception of Christianity. Analysis of the data supports the reality that the Sonjo are motivated by fear not faith. They fear the power of their god. If they were to risk breaking their religious rules, the horrible fate of shame awaits them. On the horizon they see a new idea, Christianity. But the power of the Christian God is questionable.

It is the author's hope to unleash power evangelism which reverses the position of these two gods. Let the Sonjo people realize that their god is a lesser man-made god and return to fear and trust the power of the one true God.

**APPENDIX A**  
**FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE**

Sample of the data from a focus group during the first research trip to the Sonjo. There were eight church leaders present. They are represented by L1-L8 in the tables. Questions 1-3 are shown in the first table. Questions 4-6 are shown in the second table. The leaders are marked by L1, L2, L3, etc. shown in the first column of both tables.

	1. How many people were saved last year?	2. How many delivered last year?	3. How many healed last year?
L1	2	1	3
L2	4	3	8
L3	9 only 1 is standing (remaining)	4	3 (1 was raised from the dead)
L4	3	2	5
L5	1	4	3 (2 kids, 1 adult)
L6	10	3	15
L7	30 (I testified house to house and they got born again)	2 people in their house and demon left	1 healed of epilepsy
L8	NO ANSWER	NO ANSWER	NO ANSWER

	4. What fears do people have about Christianity	5. What reasons to people give not to accept Christ?	6. How many people in your church pray for healing on a regular basis?
L1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No respect in society of Sonjo; people to laugh at them</li> <li>True Christians of Sonjo do not want to do local practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They do not know the meaning of Christianity</li> <li>For spite (they know it's wrong and you tell them so they do it anyway)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many times they believe that is pastor only and he is the only one to have the burden</li> </ul>
L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Afraid of Christianity because it is lies</li> <li>It is causing somebody to be poor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What makes people afraid is Satan.</li> </ul>	2
L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be segregated with friends and society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be blinded by the devil</li> <li>To be deceived</li> </ul>	2
L4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Afraid to leave culture</li> <li>Afraid to (come from above to me) the faith of their God Hambegeo</li> <li>Fear of death because of curse of cultural practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shame and people not respecting them</li> <li>Hard heart</li> </ul>	8
L5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People are for the deceived culture</li> <li>Fear being saved because of the culture</li> <li>Culture is very big part</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They want it but they are afraid culture up to the time they finish my time of youth to serve the culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only pastor because teaching is little</li> </ul>
L6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fear is to not believe that Jesus is God and to continue to still believe in their God. (They are afraid to not believe in their God and believe in Jesus).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is that they believe their God; they believe their God if when he is born again he will die</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People are praying for people and people get healed and 10 because of leaders. For leaders it is normal to pray inside church and outside the church.</li> </ul>
L7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People to laugh at me</li> <li>Society to segregate</li> <li>To be ashamed;</li> <li>To be beaten</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not aware if God is there; or do not believe there is hell and heaven or that there is new life after death.</li> </ul>	4
L8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People will not respect them</li> </ul>	NO ANSWER	NO ANSWER



**APPENDIX B**  
**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SONJO BELEIVERS**

The following questions were used as a guide for interviews with the Sonjo participants who have accepted the Christian faith.

1. I love Sonjo people. They have been so nice and helped me so much (give example). So can you tell me some things that you love about the Sonjo people?
2. Can you share a story with me that helps explain the Sonjo religion?
3. When you think of the god of the Sonjo what things come to mind?
4. How did you learn about Christianity?
5. What does it mean to you to be saved?
6. Can you tell me about your journey which led to your salvation?
7. Did you have to overcome any obstacles? If yes, explain.
8. Do you perceive any benefits or positive things from following Jesus?
9. Do you perceive any risks, or losses in following Jesus? Please explain.
10. What do you think the Sonjo people think about Christianity?
11. What questions do other Sonjo people ask you about Christianity or Jesus?
12. What do you see as the main obstacles to receiving Jesus for other Sonjo people?
13. How would you describe the Sonjo peoples' perception of the benefits, risks, or losses in following Jesus?

**APPENDIX C**  
**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TRADITIONAL SONJO**

The following questions were used as a guide for interviews with the Sonjo participants who practice the traditional Sonjo religion.

1. I love Sonjo people. They have been so nice and helped me so much (give example). So can you tell me some things that you love about the Sonjo people?
2. Describe the talents, abilities, and strengths of the Sonjo people?
3. What other faiths or religions have you encountered or heard about?
4. I have heard that there is life after death, how do see that, what do you think?
5. Can you think of any story or lesson you've learned about Christianity that you can share?
6. What are some other things have you observed or learned about Christianity?
7. How did you learn about those things...have you been able to observe Sonjo Christians?
8. When you think of the God of Christianity what things come to mind?
9. From what you have observed and learned, can you describe what it means to be saved and what does it mean to be a Christian?
10. How would you describe the benefits or gain in following Jesus?
11. How would you describe the risks or losses in following Jesus?
12. What kinds of things are confusing or difficult to understand about Christians?

**APPENDIX D**  
**PHOTOGRAPHY GUIDE**

The photography guide below was used with all participants.

Take a few pictures of each of the following:

Take a picture showing a positive impact or benefit of Christianity.

Take a picture showing a negative impact or risk of Christianity.

Take a picture showing what makes unbelievers want to know more about Christianity.

Train on how to use the digital camera. Given them three days to take the photos. When they return, load the pictures, have them select several photos to interpret.

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